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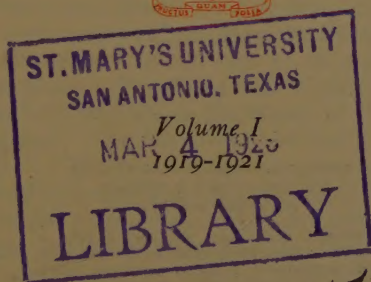
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BEST AMERICAN STORIES

1919-1924

WITH A PREFACE BY
BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS



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PREFACE

NOBODY who exercises, even casually, his power of observation can doubt that the first truly American form of literature has reached full growth. Descended from an honourable line of English forbears—allegory, legend, tale—child of Irving and Hawthorne, trained by Edgar Allan Poe, the short story has reached its maximum of strength and grace and beauty.

Some critics assert that the short story is deteriorating, if not actually declining. They have read the total production of no year, whether 1896 or 1926; they measure by the best of Poe, Aldrich, Stockton, Harte, Bierce the score or so they happen upon out of two thousand or more in the current year, and they fail to measure justly even under these odds. They recall early enthusiasm, rapture not to be regained, rather than the actual story. Bar "Rip Van Winkle," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Rappaccini's Daughter," "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," "What Was It?" "The Luck of Roaring Camp," and half a dozen others and you will find that all the stories by all the authors cited as the giant story writers are now chiefly interesting as stages in the development of the contemporary story. When challenged to name a dozen examples antedating 1900 better than a dozen post-dating 1915, the pessimists retort, "But first show me the good ones of the later period!" The obvious answer to such evasion is that these are gathered into anthologies, among which the O. Henry Memorial Volumes witness to verdict of author, editor, and critic.

A writer lives by universal appeal; more frequently, longevity of a sort attaches to the name of one long dead through his becoming a "source" for the antiquarian or the literary historian. Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" illustrates the universal, Greene's "Defence for Conny-catching," the lim-

ited appeal of the Elizabethan. If the short story in any phase of its evolution were worthless as art—untenable hypothesis—its record of swiftly changing customs would be inestimable to the student of succeeding centuries. He, after all, really cares “what scratches were made upon wax by that old Euripides.” Better than any other kind of literature, narrative reveals the generations to themselves and their successors. Always it has been the popular literature; epic yielded to metrical romance, metrical romance to prose romance that sky-rocketed, at last, in a dazzling burst of varied novel types. Every new manifestation of form has been conditioned always on its predecessor, bound by its heritage, yet free to change, to arrive at maturity and to beget a new variation. Survivals of successive forms are the landmarks of the centuries, from *Beowulf* through the *Canterbury Tales*, down to the Wessex novels.

Already, I repeat, earlier short stories patently mark stages in progress to the current story that delights and beguiles him who seeks its entertainment. Just so surely as the future scholar will turn back to this genetic native form for knowledge of life, say from 1850 to 1950, just so surely will the reader of any present who is curious about his contemporaries and interested in life itself prefer fiction of that present. Not until the short story ceases to entertain will it cease to flourish or to remain at high noon.

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

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VOLUME I
BOOK ONE

ENGLAND TO AMERICA

By MARGARET PRESCOTT MONTAGUE

From *Atlantic Monthly*

I

“**L**ORD, but English people are funny!” This was the perplexed mental ejaculation that young Lieutenant Skipworth Cary, of Virginia, found his thoughts constantly reiterating during his stay in Devonshire. Had he been, he wondered, a confiding fool, to accept so trustingly Chev Sherwood’s suggestion that he spend a part of his leave, at least, at Bishopsthorpe, where Chev’s people lived? But why should he have anticipated any difficulty here, in this very corner of England which had bred his own ancestors, when he had always hit it off so splendidly with his English comrades at the Front? Here, however, though they were all awfully kind,—at least, he was sure they meant to be kind,—something was always bringing him up short: something that he could not lay hold of, but which made him feel like a blind man groping in a strange place, or worse, like a bull in a china-shop. He was prepared enough to find differences in the American and English points of view. But this thing that baffled him did not seem to have to do with that; it was something deeper, something very definite, he was sure—and yet, what was it? The worst of it was that he had a curious feeling as if they were all—that is, Lady Sherwood and Gerald; not Sir Charles so much—protecting him from himself—keeping him from making breaks, as he phrased it. That hurt and annoyed him, and piqued his vanity. Was he a social blunderer, and weren’t a Virginia gentleman’s manners to be trusted in England without leading-strings?

He had been at the Front for several months with the Royal Flying Corps, and when his leave came, his Flight Commander, Captain Cheviot Sherwood, discovering that he meant to spend it in England, where he hardly knew a soul, had said his people down in Devonshire would be jolly glad to have him stop with them; and Skipworth Cary, knowing that, if the circumstances had been reversed, his people down in Virginia would indeed have been jolly glad to entertain Captain Sherwood, had accepted unhesitatingly. The invitation had been seconded by a letter from Lady Sherwood,—Chev's mother,—and after a few days sight-seeing in London, he had come down to Bishopsthorpe, very eager to know his friend's family, feeling as he did about Chev himself. "He's the finest man that ever went up in the air," he had written home; and to his own family's disgust, his letters had been far more full of Chev Sherwood than they had been of Skipworth Cary.

And now here he was, and he almost wished himself away—wished almost that he was back again at the Front, carrying on under Chev. There, at least, you knew what you were up against. The job might be hard enough, but it wasn't baffling and queer, with hidden undercurrents that you couldn't chart. It seemed to him that this baffling feeling of constraint had rushed to meet him on the very threshold of the drawing-room, when he made his first appearance.

As he entered, he had a sudden sensation that they had been awaiting him in a strained expectancy, and that, as he appeared, they adjusted unseen masks and began to play-act at something. "But English people don't play-act very well," he commented to himself, reviewing the scene afterward.

Lady Sherwood had come forward and greeted him in a manner which would have been pleasant enough, if he had not, with quick sensitiveness, felt it to be forced. But perhaps that was English stiffness.

Then she had turned to her husband, who was standing staring into the fireplace, although, as it was June, there was no fire there to stare at.

"Charles," she said, "here is Lieutenant Cary"; and

her voice had a certain note in it which at home Cary and his sister Nancy were in the habit of designating "mother-making-dad-mind-his-manners."

At her words the old man—and Cary was startled to see how old and broken he was—turned round and held out his hand. "How d'you do?" he said jerkily, "how d'you do?" and then turned abruptly back again to the fireplace.

"Hello! What's up! The old boy doesn't like me!" was Cary's quick, startled comment to himself.

He was so surprised by the look the other bent upon him that he involuntarily glanced across to a long mirror to see if there was anything wrong with his uniform. But no, that appeared to be all right. It was himself, then—or his country; perhaps the old sport didn't fall for Americans.

"And here is Gerald," Lady Sherwood went on in her low remote voice, which somehow made the Virginian feel very far away.

It was with genuine pleasure, though with some surprise, that he turned to greet Gerald Sherwood, Chev's younger brother, who had been, tradition in the corps said, as gallant and daring a flyer as Chev himself, until he got his in the face five months ago.

"I'm mighty glad to meet you," he said eagerly, in his pleasant, muffled Southern voice, grasping the hand the other stretched out, and looking with deep respect at the scarred face and sightless eyes.

Gerald laughed a little, but it was a pleasant laugh, and his hand-clasp was friendly.

"That's real American, isn't it?" he said. "I ought to have remembered and said it first. Sorry."

Skipworth laughed too. "Well," he conceded, "we generally are glad to meet people in my country, and we don't care who says it first. But," he added. "I didn't think I'd have the luck to find you here."

He remembered that Chev had regretted that he probably wouldn't see Gerald, as the latter was at St. Dunstan's, where they were re-educating the blinded soldiers.

The other hesitated a moment, and then said rather

awkwardly, "Oh, I'm just home for a little while; I only got here this morning, in fact."

Skipworth noted the hesitation. Did the old people get panicky at the thought of entertaining a wild man from Virginia, and send an S O S for Gerald, he wondered.

"We are so glad you could come to us," Lady Sherwood said rather hastily just then. And again he could not fail to note that she was prompting her husband.

The latter reluctantly turned round, and said, "Yes, yes, quite so. Welcome to Bishopsthorpe, my boy," as if his wife had pulled a string, and he responded mechanically, without quite knowing what he said. Then, as his eyes rested a moment on his guest, he looked as if he would like to bolt out of the room. He controlled himself, however, and, jerking round again to the fireplace, went on murmuring, "Yes, yes, yes," vaguely—just like the dormouse at the Mad Tea-Party, who went to sleep, saying, "Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle," Cary could not help thinking to himself.

But after all, it wasn't really funny, it was pathetic. Gosh, how doddering the poor old boy was! Skipworth wondered, with a sudden twist at his heart, if the war was playing the deuce with his home people, too. Was his own father going to pieces like this, and had his mother's gay vivacity fallen into that still remoteness of Lady Sherwood's? But of course not! The Carys hadn't suffered as the poor Sherwoods had, with their youngest son, Curtin, killed early in the war, and now Gerald knocked out so tragically. Lord, he thought, how they must all bank on Chev! And of course they would want to hear at once about him. "I left Chev as fit as anything, and he sent all sorts of messages," he reported, thinking it more discreet to deliver Chev's messages thus vaguely than to repeat his actual care-free remark, which had been, "Oh, tell 'em I'm jolly as a tick."

But evidently there was something wrong with the words as they were, for instantly he was aware of that curious sense of withdrawal on their part. Hastily reviewing them, he decided that they had sounded too

familiar from a stranger and a younger man like himself. He supposed he ought not to have spoken of Chev by his first name. Gee, what sticklers they were! Wouldn't his family—dad and mother and Nancy—have fairly lapped up any messages from him, even if they had been delivered a bit awkwardly? However, he added, as a concession to their point of view, "But of course, you'll have had later news of Captain Sherwood."

To which, after a pause, Lady Sherwood responded, "Oh, yes," in that remote and colourless voice which might have meant anything or nothing.

At this point dinner was announced.

Lady Sherwood drew her husband away from the empty fireplace, and Gerald slipped his arm through the Virginian's, saying pleasantly, "I'm learning to carry on fairly well at St. Dunstan's, but I confess I still like to have a pilot."

To look at the tall young fellow beside him, whose scarred face was so reminiscent of Chev's untouched good looks, who had known all the immense freedom of the air, but who was now learning to carry on in the dark, moved Skipworth Carey to generous homage.

"You know my saying I'm glad to meet you isn't just American," he said half shyly, but warmly. "It's plain English, and the straight truth. I've wanted to meet you awfully. The oldsters are always holding up your glorious exploits to us newcomers. Withers never gets tired telling about that fight of yours with the four enemy planes. And besides," he rushed on eagerly, "I'm glad to have a chance to tell Chev's brother—Captain Sherwood's brother, I mean—what I think of him. Only as a matter of fact, I can't," he broke off with a laugh. "I can't put it exactly into words, but I tell you I'd follow that man straight into hell and out the other side—or go there alone if he told me to. He is the finest chap that ever flew."

And then he felt as if a cold douche had been flung in his face, for after a moment's pause, the other returned, "That's awfully good of you," in a voice so distant and formal that the Virginian could have kicked himself. What an ass he was to be so darned enthusias-

tic with an Englishman! He supposed it was bad form to show any pleasure over praise of a member of your family. Lord, if Chev got the V. C., he reckoned it would be awful to speak of it. Still, you would have thought Gerald might have stood for a little praise of him. But then, glancing sideways at his companion, he surprised on his face a look so strange and suffering that it came to him almost violently what it must be never to fly again; to be on the threshold of life, with endless days of blackness ahead. Good God! How cruel he had been to flaunt Chev in his face! In remorseful and hasty reparation he stumbled on, "But the old fellows are always having great discussions as to which was the best—you or your brother. Withers always maintains you were."

"Withers lies, then!" the other retorted. "I never touched Chev—never came within a mile of him, and never could have."

They reached the dinner-table with that, and young Cary found himself bewildered and uncomfortable. If Gerald hadn't liked praise of Chev, he had liked praise of himself even less, it seemed.

Dinner was not a success. The Virginian found that, if there was to be conversation, the burden of carrying it on was upon him, and gosh! they don't mind silences in this man's island, do they? he commented desperately to himself, thinking how different it was from America. Why, there they acted as if silence was an egg that had just been laid, and everyone had to cackle at once to cover it up. But here the talk constantly fell to the ground, and nobody but himself seemed concerned to pick it up. His attempt to praise Chev had not been successful, and he could understand their not wanting to hear about flying and the war before Gerald.

So at last, in desperation, he wandered off into descriptions of America, finding to his relief, that he had struck the right note at last. They were glad to hear about the States, and Lady Sherwood inquired politely if the Indians still gave them much trouble; and when he assured her that in Virginia, except for the Poca-hontas tribe, they were all pretty well subdued, she

accepted his statement with complete innocence. And he was so delighted to find at last a subject to which they were evidently cordial, that he was quite carried away, and wound up by inviting them all to visit his family in Richmond, as soon as the war was over.

Gerald accepted at once, with enthusiasm; Lady Sherwood made polite murmurs, smiling at him in quite a warm and almost, indeed, maternal manner. Even Sir Charles, who had been staring at the food on his plate as if he did not quite know what to make of it, came to the surface long enough to mumble, "Yes, yes, very good idea. Countries must carry on together— What?"

But that was the only hit of the whole evening, and when the Virginian retired to his room, as he made an excuse to do early, he was so confused and depressed that he fell into an acute attack of homesickness.

Heavens, he thought, as he tumbled into bed, just suppose, now, this was little old Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A., instead of being Bishopsthorpe, Avery Cross near Wick, and all the rest of it! And at that, he grinned to himself. England wasn't such an all-fired big country that you'd think they'd have to ticket themselves with addresses a yard long, for fear they'd get lost—now, would you? Well, anyway, suppose it was Richmond, and his train just pulling into the Byrd Street Station. He stretched out luxuriously, and let his mind picture the whole familiar scene. The wind was blowing right, so there was the mellow homely smell of tobacco in the streets, and plenty of people all along the way to hail him with outstretched hands and shouts of "Hey, Skip Cary, when did you get back?" "Welcome home, my boy!" "Well, will you *look* what the cat dragged in!" And so he came to his own front door-step, and, walking straight in, surprised the whole family at breakfast; and yes—doggone it! if it wasn't Sunday, and they having waffles! And after that his obliging fancy bore him up Franklin Street, through Monroe Park, and so to Miss Sally Berkeley's door. He was sound asleep before he reached it, but in his dreams, light as a little bird, she came flying down the broad stairway to meet him, and—

But when he waked next morning, he did not find himself in Virginia, but in Devonshire, where, to his unbounded embarrassment, a white housemaid was putting up his curtains and whispering something about his bath. And though he pretended profound slumber, he was well aware that people do not turn brick-red in their sleep. And the problem of what was the matter with the Sherwood family was still before him.

II

"They're playing a game," he told himself after a few days. "That is, Lady Sherwood and Gerald are—poor old Sir Charles can't make much of a stab at it. The game is to make me think they are awfully glad to have me, when in reality there's something about me, or something I do, that gets them on the raw."

He almost decided to make some excuse and get away; but after all, that was not easy. In English novels, he remembered, they always had a wire calling them to London; but, darn it all! the Sherwoods knew mighty well there wasn't any one in London who cared a hoot about him.

The thing that got his goat most, he told himself, was that they apparently didn't like his friendship with Chev. Anyway they didn't seem to want him to talk about him; and whenever he tried to express his warm appreciation for all that the older man had done for him, he was instantly aware of a wall of reserve on their part, a holding of themselves aloof from him. That puzzled and hurt him, and put him on his dignity. He concluded that they thought it was cheeky of a youngster like him to think that a man like Chev could be his friend; and if that was the way they felt, he reckoned he'd jolly well better shut up about it.

But whatever it was that they didn't like about him, they most certainly did want him to have a good time. He and his pleasure appeared to be for the time being their chief consideration. And after the first day or so he began indeed to enjoy himself extremely. For one thing, he came to love the atmosphere of the old place

and of the surrounding country, which he and Gerald explored together. He liked to think that ancestors of his own had been inheritors of these green lanes, and pleasant mellow stretches. Then, too, after the first few days, he could not help seeing that they really began to like him, which of course was reassuring, and tapped his own warm friendliness, which was always ready enough to be released. And besides, he got by accident what he took to be a hint as to the trouble. He was passing the half-open door of Lady Sherwood's morning-room, when he heard Sir Charles's voice break out, "Good God, Elizabeth, I don't see how you stand it! When I see him so straight and fine-looking, and so untouched, beside our poor lad, and think—and think—"

Skipworth hurried out of earshot, but now he understood that look of aversion in the old man's eyes which had so startled him at first. Of course, the poor old boy might easily hate the sight of him beside Gerald. With Gerald himself he really got along famously. He was a most delightful companion, full of anecdotes and history of the countryside, every foot of which he had apparently explored in the old days with Chev and the younger brother, Curtin. Yet even with Gerald, Cary sometimes felt that aloofness and reserve, and that older protective air that they all showed him. Take, for instance, that afternoon when they were lolling together on the grass in the park. The Virginian, running on in his usual eager manner, had plunged without thinking into an account of a particularly daring bit of flying on Chev's part, when suddenly he realized that Gerald had rolled over on the grass and buried his face in his arms, and interrupted himself awkwardly. "But, of course," he said, "he must have written home about it himself."

"No, or if he did, I didn't hear of it. Go on," Gerald said in a muffled voice.

A great rush of compassion and remorse overwhelmed the Virginian, and he burst out penitently, "What a brute I am! I'm always forgetting and running on about flying, when I know it must hurt like the very devil!"

The other drew a difficult breath. "Yes," he admitted, "what you say does hurt in a way—in a way you can't understand. But all the same I like to hear you. Go on about Chev."

So Skipworth went on and finished his account, winding up, "I don't believe there's another man in the service who could have pulled it off—but I tell you your brother's one in a million."

"Good God, don't I know it!" the other burst out. "We were all three the jolliest pals together," he got out presently in a choked voice, "Chev and the young un and I; and now——"

He did not finish, but Cary guessed his meaning. Now the young un, Curtin, was dead, and Gerald himself knocked out. But, heavens! the Virginian thought, did Gerald think Chev would go back on him now on account of his blindness? Well, you could everlastingly bet he wouldn't!

"Chev thinks the world and all of you!" he cried in eager defense of his friend's loyalty. "Lots of times when we're all awfully jolly together, he makes some excuse and goes off by himself; and Withers told me it was because he was so frightfully cut up about you. Withers said he told him once that he'd a lot rather have got it himself—so you can everlastingly bank on him!"

Gerald gave a terrible little gasp. "I—I knew he'd feel like that," he got out. "We've always cared such a lot for each other." And then he pressed his face harder than ever into the grass, and his long body quivered all over. But not for long. In a moment he took fierce hold on himself, muttering, "Well, one must carry on, whatever happens," and apologized disjointedly. "What a fearful fool you must think me! And—and this isn't very pippy for you, old chap." Presently, after that, he sat up, and said, brushing it all aside, "We're facing the old moat, aren't we? There's an interesting bit of tradition about it that I must tell you."

And there you were, Cary thought: no matter how much Gerald might be suffering from his misfortune, he must carry on just the same, and see that his visitor

had a pleasant time. It made the Virginian feel like an outsider and very young, as if he were not old enough for them to show him their real feelings.

Another thing that he noticed was that they did not seem to want him to meet people. They never took him anywhere to call, and if visitors came to the house, they showed an almost panicky desire to get him out of the way. That again hurt his pride. What in heaven's name was the matter with him anyway!

III

However, on the last afternoon of his stay at Bishopsthorpe, he told himself with a rather rueful grin, that his manners must have improved a little, for they took him to tea at the rectory.

He was particularly glad to go there because, from certain jokes of Withers's, who had known the Sherwoods since boyhood, he gathered that Chev and the rector's daughter were engaged. And just as he would have liked Chev to meet Sally Berkeley, so he wanted to meet Miss Sybil Gaylord.

He had little hope of having a tête-à-tête with her, but as it fell out he did. They were all in the rectory garden together, Gerald and the rector a little behind Miss Gaylord and himself, as they strolled down a long walk with high hedges bordering it. On the other side of the hedge Lady Sherwood and her hostess still sat at the tea-table, and then it was that Cary heard Mrs. Gaylord say distinctly, "I'm afraid the strain has been too much for you—you should have let us have him."

To which Lady Sherwood returned quickly, "Oh, no, that would have been impossible with——"

"Come—come this way—I must show you the view from the arbor," Miss Gaylord broke in breathlessly; and laying a hand on his arm, she turned him abruptly into a side path.

Glancing down at her, the Southerner could not but note the panic and distress in her fair face. It was so obvious that the overheard words referred to him, and he was so bewildered by the whole situation, that

he burst out impulsively, "I say, what is the matter with me? Why do they find me so hard to put up with? Is it something I do—or don't they like Americans? Honestly, I wish you'd tell me."

She stood still at that, looking at him, her blue eyes full of distress and concern.

"Oh, I am so sorry," she cried. "They would be so sorry to have you think anything like that."

"But what is it?" he persisted. "Don't they like Americans?"

"Oh, no, it isn't that—Oh, quite the contrary!" she returned eagerly.

"Then it's something about me they don't like?"

"Oh, no, no! Least of all, that—*don't* think that!" she begged.

"But what am I to think then?"

"Don't think anything just yet," she pleaded. "Wait a little, and you will understand."

She was so evidently distressed that he could not press her further; and fearing she might think him unappreciative, he said, "Well, whatever it is, it hasn't prevented me from having a ripping good time. They've seen to that, and just done everything for my pleasure."

She looked up quickly, and to his relief he saw that for once he had said the right thing.

"You have enjoyed it, then?" she questioned eagerly.

"Most awfully," he assured her warmly. "I shall always remember what a happy leave they gave me."

She gave a little sigh of satisfaction, "I am so glad," she said. "They wanted you to have a good time—that was what we all wanted."

He looked at her gratefully, thinking how sweet she was in her fair English beauty, and how good to care that he should have enjoyed his leave. How different she was too from Sally Berkeley—why she would have made two of his little girl! And how quiet! Sallie Berkeley, with her quick glancing vivacity, would have been all around her and off again like a humming-bird before she could have uttered two words. And yet he was sure that they would have been friends, just as he and Chev were. Perhaps they all would be, after

the war. And then he began to talk about Chev, being sure that, had the circumstances been reversed, Sally Berkeley would have wanted news of him. Instantly he was aware of a tense listening stillness on her part. That pleased him. Well, she did care for the old fellow all right, he thought; and though she made no response, averting her face, and plucking nervously at the leaves of the hedge as they passed slowly along, he went on pouring out his eager admiration for his friend.

At last they came to a seat in an arbour, from which one looked out upon a green beneficent landscape. It was an intimate secluded little spot—and oh, if Sallie Berkeley were only there to sit beside him! And as he thought of this, it came to him whimsically that in all probability she must be longing for Chev, just as he was for Sally.

Dropping down on the bench beside her, he leaned over, and said with a friendly, almost brotherly, grin of understanding, "I reckon you're wishing Captain Sherwood was sitting here, instead of Lieutenant Cary."

The minute the impulsive words were out of his mouth, he knew he had blundered, been awkward, and inexcusably intimate. She gave a little choked gasp, and her blue eyes stared up at him, wide and startled. Good heavens, what a break he had made! No wonder the Sherwoods couldn't trust him in company! There seemed no apology that he could offer in words, but at least, he thought, he would show her that he would not have intruded on her secret without being willing to share his with her. With awkward haste he put his hand into his breast-pocket, and dragged forth the picture of Sally Berkeley he always carried there.

"This is the little girl I'm thinking about," he said, turning very red, yet boyishly determined to make amends, and also proudly confident of Sally Berkeley's charms. "I'd like mighty well for you two to know one another."

She took the picture in silence, and for a long moment stared down at the soft little face, so fearless, so confident and gay, that smiled appealingly back at her. Then she did something astonishing,—something which seemed to

him wholly un-English,—and yet he thought it the sweetest thing he had ever seen. Cupping her strong hands about the picture with a quick protectiveness, she suddenly raised it to her lips, and kissed it lightly. “O little girl!” she cried, “I hope you will be very happy!”

The little involuntary act, so tender, so sisterly and spontaneous, touched the Virginian extremely.

“Thanks, awfully,” he said unsteadily. “She’ll think a lot of that, just as I do—and I know she’d wish you the same.”

She made no reply to that, and as she handed the picture back to him, he saw that her hands were trembling, and he had a sudden conviction that, if she had been Sally Berkeley, her eyes would have been full of tears. As she was Sybil Gaylord, however, there were no tears there, only a look that he never forgot. The look of one much older, protective, maternal almost, and as if she were gazing back at Sally Berkeley and himself from a long way ahead on the road of life. He supposed it was the way most English people felt nowadays. He had surprised it so often on all their faces, that he could not help speaking of it.

“You all think we Americans are awfully young and raw, don’t you?” he questioned.

“Oh, no, not that,” she deprecated. “Young perhaps for these days, yes—but it is more that you—that your country is so—so unsuffered. And we don’t want you to suffer!” she added quickly.

Yes, that was it! He understood now, and, heavens, how fine it was! Old England was wounded deep—deep. What she suffered herself she was too proud to show; but out of it she wrought a great maternal care for the newcomer. Yes, it *was* fine—he hoped his country would understand.

Miss Gaylord rose. “There are Gerald and father looking for you,” she said, “and I must go now.” She held out her hand. “Thank you for letting me see her picture, and for everything you said about Captain Sherwood—for *everything*, remember—I want you to remember.”

With a light pressure of her fingers she was gone,

slipping away through the shrubbery, and he did not see her again.

IV

So he came to his last morning at Bishopsthorpe; and as he dressed, he wished it could have been different; that he were not still conscious of that baffling wall of reserve between himself and Chev's people, for whom, despite all, he had come to have a real affection.

In the breakfast-room he found them all assembled, and his last meal there seemed to him as constrained and difficult as any that had preceded it. It was over finally, however, and in a few minutes he would be leaving.

"I can never thank you enough for the splendid time I've had here," he said as he rose. "I'll be seeing Chev to-morrow, and I'll tell him all about everything."

Then he stopped dead. With a smothered exclamation, old Sir Charles had stumbled to his feet, knocking over his chair, and hurried blindly out of the room; and Gerald said, "*Mother!*" in a choked appeal.

As if it were a signal between them, Lady Sherwood pushed her chair back a little from the table, her long delicate fingers dropped together loosely in her lap; she gave a faint sigh as if a restraining mantle slipped from her shoulders, and, looking up at the youth before her, her fine pale face lighted with a kind of glory, she said, "No, dear lad, no. You can never tell Chev, for he is gone."

"*Gone!*" he cried.

"Yes," she nodded back at him, just above a whisper; and now her face quivered, and the tears began to rush down her cheeks.

"Not *dead!*" he cried. "Not Chev—not that! O my God, Gerald, not *that!*"

"Yes," Gerald said. "They got him two days after you left."

It was so overwhelming, so unexpected and shocking, above all so terrible, that the friend he had so greatly loved and admired was gone out of his life forever,

that young Cary stumbled back into his seat, and, crumpling over, buried his face in his hands, making great uncouth gasps as he strove to choke back his grief.

Gerald groped hastily around the table, and flung an arm about his shoulders.

"Steady on, dear fellow, steady," he said, though his own voice broke.

"When did you hear?" Cary got out at last.

"We got the official notice just the day before you came—and Withers has written us particulars since."

"And you *let* me come in spite of it! And stay on, when every word I said about him must have—have fairly *crucified* each one of you! Oh, forgive me! forgive me!" he cried distractedly. He saw it all now; he understood at last. It was not on Gerald's account that they could not talk of flying and of Chev, it was because—because their hearts were broken over Chev himself. "Oh, forgive me!" he gasped again.

"Dear lad, there is nothing to forgive," Lady Sherwood returned. "How could we help loving your generous praise of our poor darling? We loved it, and you for it; we wanted to hear it, but we were afraid. We were afraid we might break down, and that you would find out."

The tears were still running down her cheeks. She did not brush them away now; she seemed glad to have them there at last.

Sinking down on his knees, he caught her hands. "Why did you *let* me do such a horrible thing?" he cried. "Couldn't you have trusted me to understand? Couldn't you *see* I loved him just as you did—No, no!" he broke down humbly. "Of course I couldn't love him as his own people did. But you must have seen how I felt about him—how I admired him, and would have followed him anywhere—and *of course* if I had known, I should have gone away at once."

"Ah, but that was just what we were afraid of," she said quickly. "We were afraid you would go away and have a lonely leave somewhere. And in these days a boy's leave is so precious a thing that nothing must spoil it—*nothing*," she reiterated; and her tears fell

upon his hands like a benediction. "But we didn't do it very well, I'm afraid," she went on presently, with gentle contrition. "You were too quick and understanding; you guessed there was something wrong. We were sorry not to manage better," she apologized.

"Oh, you wonderful, wonderful people!" he gasped. "Doing everything for my happiness, when all the time—all the time——"

His voice went out sharply, as his mind flashed back to scene after scene: to Gerald's long body lying quivering on the grass; to Sybil Gaylord wishing Sallie Berkeley happiness out of her own tragedy; and to the high look on Lady Sherwood's face. They seemed to him themselves, and yet more than themselves—shining bits in the mosaic of a great nation. Disjointedly there passed through his mind familiar words—"these are they who have washed their garments—having come out of great tribulation." No wonder they seemed older.

"We—we couldn't have done it in America," he said humbly.

He had a desperate desire to get away to himself; to hide his face in his arms, and give vent to the tears that were stifling him; to weep for his lost friend, and for this great heartbreaking heroism of theirs.

"But why did you do it?" he persisted. "Was it because I was his friend?"

"Oh, it was much more than that," Gerald said quickly. "It was a matter of the two countries. Of course, we jolly well knew you didn't belong to us, and didn't want to, but for the life of us we couldn't help a sort of feeling that you did. And when America was in at last, and you fellows began to come, you seemed like our very own come back after many years, and," he added, a throb in his voice, "we were most awfully glad to see you—we wanted a chance to show you how England felt."

Skipworth Cary rose to his feet. The tears for his friend were still wet upon his lashes. Stooping, he took Lady Sherwood's hands in his and raised them to his lips. "As long as I live, I shall never forget," he said.

"And others of us have seen it too in other ways—be sure America will never forget, either."

She looked up at his untouched youth out of her beautiful sad eyes, the exalted light still shining through her tears. "Yes," she said, "you see it was—I don't know exactly how to put it—but it was England to America."

“FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO ”

•By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

From Pictorial Review

WHEN Christopher Kain told me his story, sitting late in his dressing-room at the Philharmonic, I felt that I ought to say something, but nothing in the world seemed adequate. It was one of those times when words have no weight: mine sounded like a fly buzzing in the tomb of kings. And after all, he did not hear me; I could tell that by the look on his face as he sat there staring into the light, the lank, dark hair framing his waxen brow, his shoulders hanging forward, his lean, strong, sentient fingers wrapped around the brown neck of “Ugo,” the ’cello, tightly.

Agnes Kain was a lady, as a lady was before the light of that poor worn word went out. Quiet, reserved, gracious, continent, bearing in face and form the fragile beauty of a rose-petal come to its fading on a windless ledge, she moved down the years with the steadfast sweetness of the gentlewoman—gentle, and a woman.

They knew little about her in the city, where she had come with her son. They did not need to. Looking into her eyes, into the transparent soul behind them, they could ask no other credential for the name she bore and the lavender she wore for the husband of whom she never spoke.

She spoke of him, indeed, but that was in privacy, and to her son. As Christopher grew through boyhood, she watched him; in her enveloping eagerness she fore-

stalled the hour when he would have asked, and told him about his father, Daniel Kain.

It gave them the added bond of secret-sharers. The tale grew as the boy grew. Each night when Christopher crept into his mother's bed for the quiet hour of her voice, it was as if he crept in to another world, the wind-blown, sky-encompassed kingdom of the Kains, Daniel, his father, and Maynard, *his* father, another Maynard before *him*, and all the Kains—and the Hill and the House, the Willow Wood, the Moor Under the Cloud, the Beach where the gray seas pounded, the boundless Marsh, the Lilac-hedge standing against the stars.

He knew he would have to be a man of men to measure up to that heritage, a man strong, grave, thoughtful, kind with the kindness that *never* falters, brave with the courage of that dark and massive folk whose blood ran in his veins. Coming as it did, a world of legend growing up side by side with the matter-of-fact world of Concord Street, it was made to fit in with all things natural, and it never occurred to him to question. He, the boy, was *not* massive, strong, or brave; he saw things in the dark that frightened him, his thin shoulders were bound to droop, the hours of practise on his violin left him with no blood in his legs and a queer pallor on his brow.

Nor was he always grave, thoughtful, kind. He did not often lose his temper, the river of his young life ran too smooth and deep. But there were times when he did. Brief passions swept him, blinded him, twisted his fingers, left him sobbing, retching, and weak as death itself. He never seemed to wonder at the discrepancy in things, however, any more than he wondered at the look in his mother's eyes, as she hung over him, waiting, in those moments of nausea after rage. She had not the look of the gentlewoman then; she had more the look, a thousand times, of the prisoner led through the last gray corridor in the dawn.

He saw her like that once when he had not been angry. It was on a day when he came into the front hall unexpectedly as a stranger was going out of the door. The stranger was dressed in rough, brown homespun; in one

hand he held a brown velour hat, in the other a thorn stick without a ferrule. Nor was there anything more worthy of note in his face, an average-long face with hollowed cheeks, sunken gray eyes, and a high forehead, narrow, sallow, and moist.

No, it was not the stranger that troubled Christopher. It was his mother's look at his own blundering entrance, and, when the man was out of hearing, the tremulous haste of her explanation.

"He came about some papers, you know."

"You mean our *Morning Post*?" Christopher asked her.

She let her breath out all at once and colour flooded her face.

"Yes," she told him. "Yes, yes."

Neither of them said anything more about it.

It was that same day, toward evening, that Christopher broke one of his long silences, reverting to a subject always near to them both.

"Mother, you've never told me where it is—on the map, I mean."

She was looking the other way. She did not turn around.

"I—Chris—I—I haven't a map in the house."

He did not press the matter. He went out into the back yard presently, under the grape-trellis, and there he stood still for a long time, staring at nothing in particular.

He was growing up.

He went away to boarding-school not long after this, taking with him the picture of his adored mother, the treasured epic of his dark, strong fathers, his narrow shoulders, his rare, blind bursts of passion, his new-born wonder, and his violin. At school they thought him a queer one.

The destinies of men are unaccountable things. Five children in the village of Deer Bay came down with diphtheria. That was why the academy shut up for a week, and that was what started Christopher on his way home for an unexpected holiday. And then it was only by one chance in a thousand that he should glimpse

his mother's face in the down-train halted at the Junction where he himself was changing.

She did not see him till he came striding along the aisle of her coach, his arms full of his things, face flushed, eyes brimming with the surprise and pleasure of seeing her; lips trembling questions.

"Why, Mother, what on earth? Where are you going? I'm to have a week at least, Mother; and here you're going away, and you didn't tell me, and what is it, and everything?"

His eager voice trailed off. The colour drained out of his face and there was a shadow in his eyes. He drew back from her the least way.

"What is it, Mother? *Mother!*"

Somewhere on the platform outside the conductor's droning "*—board*" ran along the coaches. Agnes Kain opened her white lips.

"Get off before it's too late, Christopher. I haven't time to explain now. Go home, and Mary will see you have everything. I'll be back in a day or so. Kiss me, and go quickly. Quickly!"

He did not kiss her. He would not have kissed her for worlds. He was too bewildered, dazed, lost, too inexpressibly hurt. On the platform outside, had she turned ever so little to look, she might have seen his face again for an instant as the wheels ground on the rails. Colour was coming back to it again, a murky colour like the shadow of a red cloud.

They must have wondered, in the coach with her, at the change in the calm, unobtrusive, well-gowned gentlewoman, their fellow-passenger. Those that were left after another two hours saw her get down at a barren station where an old man waited in a carriage. The halt was brief, and none of them caught sight of the boyish figure that slipped down from the rearmost coach to take shelter for himself and his dark, tempest-ridden face behind the shed at the end of the platform—

Christopher walked out across a broad, high, cloudy plain, following a red road, led by the dust-feather hanging over the distant carriage.

He walked for miles, creeping ant-like between the

immensities of the brown plain and the tumbled sky. Had he been less implacable, less intent, he might have noticed many things, the changing conformation of the clouds, the far flight of a gull, the new perfume and texture of the wind that flowed over his hot temples. But as it was, the sea took him by surprise. Coming over a little rise, his eyes focused for another long, dun fold of the plain, it seemed for an instant as if he had lost his balance over a void; for a wink he felt the passing of a strange sickness. He went off a little way to the side of the road and sat down on a flat stone.

The world had become of a sudden infinitely simple, as simple as the inside of a cup. The land broke down under him, a long, naked slope fringed at the foot of a ribbon of woods. Through the upper branches he saw the shingles and chimneys of a pale grey village clinging to a white beach, a beach which ran up to the left in a bolder flight of cliffs, showing on their crest a cluster of roofs and dull-green gable-ends against the sea that lifted vast, unbroken, to the rim of the cup.

Christopher was fifteen, and queer even for that queer age. He had a streak of the girl in him at his adolescence, and, as he sat there in a huddle, the wind coming out of this huge new gulf of life seemed to pass through him, bone and tissue, and tears rolled down his face.

The carriage bearing his strange mother was gone, from sight and from mind. His eyes came down from the lilac-crowned hill to the beach, where it showed in white patches through the wood, and he saw that the wood was of willows. And he remembered the plain behind him, the wide, brown moor under the cloud. He got up on his wobbly legs. There were stones all about him in the whispering wire-grass, and like them the one he had been sitting on bore a blurred inscription. He read it aloud, for some reason, his voice borne away faintly on the river of air:

Here Lie The Earthly Remains Of

MAYNARD KAIN, SECOND

Born 1835—Died 1863 For the Preservation of the Union

His gaze went on to another of those worn stones.

MAYNARD KAIN, ESQUIRE

1819—1849

This Monument Erected In His Memory By His Sorrowing
Widow, Harriet Burnam Kain

The windy Gales of the West Indias
Laid Claim to His Noble Soul
And Took him on High to his Creator
Who made him Whole.

There was no moss or lichen on this wind-scoured slope. In the falling dusk the old white stones stood up like the bones of the dead themselves, and the only sound was the rustle of the wire-grass creeping over them in a dry tide. The boy had taken off his cap; the sea-wind moving under the mat of his damp hair gave it the look of some somber, outlandish cowl. With the night coming on, his solemnity had an elfin quality. He found what he was looking for at last, and his fingers had to help his eyes.

DANIEL KAIN

Beloved Husband of Agnes Willoughby Kain

Born 1860—Died 1886

Forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Christopher Kain told me that he left the naked graveyard repeating it to himself. "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." conscious less of the words than of the august rhythm falling in with the pulse of his exaltation.

The velvet darkness that hangs under cloud had come down over the hill and the great marsh stretching away to the south of it. Agnes Kain stood in the open doorway, one hand on the brown wood, the other pressed to her cheek.

"You heard it *that* time, Nelson?"

"No, ma'am." The old man in the entrance-hall be-

hind her shook his head. In the thin, blown light of the candelabra which he held high, the worry and doubt of her deepened on his singularly-unlined face.

"And you might well catch your death in that draft, ma'am."

But she only continued to stare out between the pillars where the lilac-hedge made a wall of deeper blackness across the night.

"What am I thinking of?" she whispered, and then: "*There!*"

And this time the old man heard it, a nearer, wind-blown hail.

"Mother! Oh, Mother!"

The boy came striding through the gap of the gate in the hedge.

"It's I, Mother! Chris! Aren't you surprised?"

She had no answer. As he came she turned and moved away from the door, and the old man, peering from under the flat candle-flames, saw her face like wax. And he saw the boy, Christopher, in the doorway, his hands flung out, his face transfigured.

"Mother! I'm here! Don't you understand?"

He touched her shoulder. She turned to him, as it were, lazily.

"Yes," she breathed. "I see."

He threw his arms about her, and felt her shaking from head to foot. But he was shaking, too.

"I knew the way!" he cried. "I knew it, Mother, I knew it! I came down from the Moor and there was the Willow Wood, and I knew the way home. And when I came, Mother, it was like the trees bowing down their branches in the dark. And when I came by the Beach, Mother, it was like a roll of drums beating for me, and when I came to the Hill I saw the Hedge standing against the sky, and I came, and here I am!"

She expressed no wonder, asked no question.

"Yes," was all she said, and it was as if she spoke of a tree coming to its leaf, the wind to its height, the tide to its flood.

Had he been less rapt and triumphant he must have wondered more at that icy lassitude, and at the cloak of

ceremony she wrapped about her to hide a terror. It was queer to hear the chill urbanity of her: "This is Christopher, Nelson; Christopher, this is your father's servant, Nelson." It was queerer still to see the fastidious decorum with which she led him over this, the familiar house of his fathers.

He might have been a stranger, come with a guide-book in his hand. When he stood on his heels in the big drawing-room, staring up with all his eyes at the likenesses of those men he had known so well, it was strange to hear her going on with all the patter of the gallery attendant, names of painters, prices, dates. He stood before the portrait of Daniel Kain, his father, a dark-skinned, longish face with a slightly-protruding nether lip, hollow temples, and a round chin, deeply cleft. As in all the others, the eyes, even in the dead pigment, seemed to shine with an odd, fixed luminosity of their own, and like the others from first to last of the line, it bore upon it the stamp of an imperishable youth. And all the while he stood there, drinking it in, detail by detail, his mother spoke, not of the face, but of the frame, some obscure and unsuspected excellence in the gold-leaf on the frame.

More than once in that stately tour of halls and chambers he found himself protesting gaily, "I know, Mother! I know, I know!"

But the contagion of his glory did not seem to touch her. Nothing seemed to touch her. Only once was the fragile, bright shell of her punctilio penetrated for a moment, and that was when Christopher, lagging, turned back to a door they were about to pass and threw it open with the happy laugh of a discoverer. And then, even before she could have hushed him, the laughter on his lips died of itself.

A man lay on a bed in the room, his face as colourless and still as the pillow behind it. His eyes were open, but they did not move from the three candles burning on the high bureau, and he seemed unconscious of any intrusion.

"I didn't know!" Christopher whispered, shocked, and shamed.

When the door was closed again his mother explained. She explained at length, concisely, standing quite still, with one frail, fine hand worrying the locket she wore at her throat. Nelson stood quite still too, his attention engrossed in his candle-wicks. And Christopher stood quite still, and all their shadows— That man was the caretaker, the man, Christopher was to understand, who had been looking after the place. His name was Sanderson. He had fallen ill, very ill. In fact, he was dying. And that was why his mother had had to come down, post-haste, without warning. To see about some papers. Some papers. Christopher was to understand——

Christopher understood. Indeed there was not much to understand. And yet, when they had gone on, he was bothered by it. Already, so young he was, so ruthless, and so romantic, he had begun to be a little ashamed of that fading, matter-of-fact world of Concord Street. And it was with just that world which he wished to forget, that the man lying ill in the candle-lit chamber was linked in Christopher's memory. For it was the same man he had seen in the doorway that morning months ago, with a brown hat in one hand and a thorn stick in the other.

Even a thing like that may be half put aside, though—for a while. And by the time Christopher went to his room for the night the thought of the interloper had retired into the back of his mind, and they were all Kains there on the Hill, **inheritors of romance**. He found himself bowing to his mother with a courtliness he had never known, and an "I wish you a good night," sounding a century old on his lips. He saw the remote, patrician figure bow as gravely in return, a petal of colour as hard as paint on the whiteness of either cheek. He did not see her afterward, though, when the merciful door was closed.

Before he slept he explored the chamber, touching old objects with reverent finger-tips. He came on a leather case like an absurdly overgrown beetle, hidden in a corner, and a violoncello was in it. He had seen such things before, but he had never touched one, and when

he lifted it from the case he had a moment of feeling very odd at the pit of his stomach. Sitting in his underthings on the edge of the bed, he held the wine-coloured creature in the crook of his arm for a long time, the look in his round eyes, half eagerness, half pain, of one pursuing the shadow of some ghostly and elusive memory.

He touched the C-string by and by with an adventuring thumb. I have heard "Ugo" sing, myself, and I know what Christopher meant when he said that the sound did not come out of the instrument, but that it came *in* to it, sweeping home from all the walls and corners of the chamber, a slow, rich, concentric wind of tone. He felt it about him, murmurous, pulsating, like the sound of surf borne from some far-off coast.

And then it was like drums, still farther off. And then it was the feet of marching men, massive, dark, grave men with luminous eyes, and the stamp on their faces of an imperishable youth.

He sat there so lost and rapt that he heard nothing of his mother's footsteps hurrying in the hall; knew nothing till he saw her face in the open doorway. She had forgotten herself this time; that fragile defense of gentility was down. For a moment they stared at each other across a gulf of silence, and little by little the boy's cheeks grew as white as hers, his hands as cold, his lungs as empty of breath.

"What is it, Mother?"

"Oh, Christopher, Christopher—— Go to bed, dear."

He did not know why, but of a sudden he felt ashamed and a little frightened, and, blowing out the candle, he crept under the covers.

The afternoon was bright with a rare sun and the world was quiet. Christopher lay full-spread on the turf, listening idly to the "clip-clip" of Nelson's shears as the old man trimmed the hedge.

"And was my father *very* strong?" he asked with a drowsy pride.

"No, not so very." Nelson stopped clipping and was immediately lost in the past.

"Only when he was *that* way five strong men couldn't

turn him. I'll say that. No, if they had to get him with a shotgun that day, 'twas nobody's fault nor sin. If Guy Bullard seen Daniel there on the sand with an ax in his hand and foam-like on his lips, and the little ones cornered where he caught them between cliff and water—Guy's own baby amongst them—and knowing the sickness of the Kains as he and everybody else did—why, I'm free and willing to say 'twas his bounden duty to hold a true aim and pull a steady trigger on Daniel, man of his though I was, and man of his poor father before him——

"No, I can't make it right to lay blame on any man for it, no more than I can on them, his brother officers, that broke Maynard's neck with their tent-pegs the night after Gettysburg. No, no——"

It was evidently a time-worn theme, an argument, an *apologia*, accepted after years of bitterness and self-searching. He went on with the remote serenity of age, that has escaped the toils of passion, pursuing the old, worn path of his mind, his eyes buried in vacancy.

"No, 'twas a mercy to the both of them, father and son, and a man must see it so. 'Twould be better of course if they could have gone easier, same as the *old* Maynard went, thinking himself the Lord our God to walk on the water and calm the West Indy gale. That's better, better for all hands round. But if it had to come so, in violence and fear, then nobody need feel the sin of it on his soul—nobody excepting the old man Bickers, him that told Daniel. For 'twas from that day he began to take it on.

"I saw it myself. There was Daniel come home from other parts where his mother had kept him, out of gossip's way, bright as you please and knowing nothing wrong with the blood of the Kains. And so I say the sin lays on the loose-wagging tongue of Bickers, for from the day he let it out to Daniel, Daniel changed. 'Twad like he'd heard his doom, and went to it. Bickers is dead a long time now, but may the Lord God lay eternal damnation on his soul!"

Even then there was no heat; the curse had grown a formula. Having come to the end, the old man's

eyes tumbled down painlessly out of the void and discovered the shears in his hand.

"Dear me, that's so," he said to himself. One thought was enough at a time. He fell to work again. The steady "clip-clip-clip" moved off slowly along the hedge. Not once did he remember; not once as the indefatigable worker shuffled himself out of sight around the house did he look back with any stirring of recollection at the boyish figure lying there as still as a shadow cast in the deep grass.

A faintly lop-sided moon swam in the zenith. For three days now that rare clarity had hung in the sky, and for three nights the moon had grown. Its benign, poisonous illumination flowed down steeply through the windows of the dark chamber where Christopher huddled on the bed's edge, three pale, chill islands spread on the polished floor.

Once again the boy brought the bow home across the shivering strings, and, as if ears could be thirsty as a drunkard's throat, he drank his fill of the 'cello's deep, full-membered chord. The air was heavy with the resonance of marching feet, ghostly feet marching and marching down upon him in slow, inexorable crescendo as the tides ebbed later among the sedges on the marsh and the moon grew big. And above the pulse of the march he seemed to hear another cadence, a thin laughter.

He laughed too, giving himself up to that spectral contagion. He saw the fat, iridescent bubble with the Hill in it, the House of dreams, the Beach and the Moor and Willow Wood of fancy, and all the grave, strong, gentle line of Kains to whom he had been made bow down in worship. He saw himself taken in, soul and body, by a thin-plated fraud, a cheap trick of mother's words, as before him, his father had been. And the faint exhalations from the moon-patches on the floor showed his face contorted with a still, set grimace of mirth.

Anger came over him in a white veil, twitching his lips and his toes and bending his fingers in knots. Through the veil a sound crept, a sound he knew well

by this time, secret footfalls in the hall, faltering, retreating, loitering, returning to lag near the door.

How he hated her! It is curious that not once did his passion turn against his blighted fathers; it was against the woman who had borne him, the babe, and lied to him, the boy—against her, and against that man, that interloper, dying in a room below.

The thought that had been willing to creep out of sight into the back-country of his mind on that first night came out now like a red, devouring cloud. Who was that man?

What was he dying of—or *supposed* to be dying of? What had he been doing that morning in Concord Street? What was he doing here, in the house of the men who had never grown old and of the boy who would never grow old? Why had his mother come down here, where he was, so queerly, so secretly, so frightened?

Christopher would have liked to kill that man. He shivered and licked his lips. He would have liked to do something bloody and abominable to that face with the hollow cheeks, the sunken grey eyes, and the forehead, high, sallow, and moist. He would have liked to take an ax in his hand and run along the thundering beach and catch that face in a corner somewhere between cliff and water. The desire to do this thing possessed him and blinded him like the kiss of lightning.

He found himself on the floor at the edge of the moonlight, full of weakness and nausea. He felt himself weeping as he crawled back to the bed, his cheeks and neck bathed in a flood of painless tears. He threw himself down, dazed with exhaustion.

It seemed to him that his mother had been calling a long while. "Christopher! What is it? What is it, boy?"

He had heard no footsteps, going or coming; she must have been there all the time, waiting, listening, her ear pressed to the thick, old paneling of the door. The thought was like wine; the torment of her whispering was sweet in his ears.

"Oh, Chris, Chris! You're making yourself sick!"

"Yes," he said. He lifted on an elbow and repeated

it in a voice which must have sounded strange enough to the listener beyond the door. "Yes!" he said. "Yes!"

"Go away!" he cried of a sudden, making a wide, dim, imperious gesture in the dark.

"No, no," the imploring whisper crept in. "You're making yourself sick—Christopher—all over nothing—nothing in the world. It's so foolish—so foolish—foolish! Oh, if I could only tell you, Christopher—if I could tell you——"

"Tell me *what?*" He shuddered with the ecstasy of his own irony. "Who that man is? That 'care-taker'? What he's doing here? What *you're* doing here?——" He began to scream in a high, brittle voice: "*Go away from that door! Go away!*"

This time she obeyed. He heard her retreating, soft-footed and frightened, along the hall. She was abandoning him—without so much as trying the door, just once again, to see if it were still bolted against her.

She did not care. She was sneaking off—down the stairs—Oh, yes, he knew where.

His lips began to twitch again and his finger nails scratched on the bedclothes. If only he had something, some weapon, an axe, a broad, keen, glittering axe! He would show them! He was strong, incredibly strong! Five men could not have turned him back from what he was going to do—if only he had something.

His hand, creeping, groping, closed on the neck of the 'cello leaning by the bed. He laughed.

Oh, yes, he would stop her from going down there; he would hold her, just where she was on the dark stair, nerveless, breathless, as long as he liked, if he liked he would bring her back, cringing, begging.

He drew the bow, and laughed higher and louder yet to hear the booming discord rocking in upon him from the shadows. Swaying from side to side, he lashed the hollow creature to madness. They came in the press of the gale, marching, marching, the wild, dark pageant of his fathers, nearer and nearer through the moon-struck night.

"Tell me *what?*" he laughed. "*What?*"

And abruptly he slept, sprawled crosswise on the covers, half-clothed, dishevelled, triumphant.

It was not the same night, but another; whether the next or the next but one, or two, Christopher can not say. But he was out of doors.

He had escaped from the house at dusk; he knew that.

He had run away, through the hedge and down the back side of the hill, torn between the two, the death, warm and red like life, and the birth, pale, chill, and inexorable as death.

Most of that daft night-running will always be blank in Christopher's mind; moments and moments, like islands of clarity, remain. He brings back one vivid interval when he found himself seated on his father's gravestone among the whispering grasses, staring down into the pallid bowl of the world. And in that moment he knew what Daniel Kain had felt, and Maynard Kain before him; a passionate and contemptuous hatred for all the dullards in the world who never dreamed dreams or saw visions or sang wordless songs or ran naked-hearted in the flood of the full-blown moon. He hated them because they could not by any possibility comprehend his magnificent separation, his starry sanity, his kinship with the gods. And he had a new thirst to obliterate the whole creeping race of dust-dwellers with one wide, incomparably bloody gesture.

It was late when he found himself back again before the house, and an ink-black cloud touched the moon's edge. After the airless evening a wind had sprung up in the east; it thrashed among the lilac-stems as he came through them and across the turf, silent-footed as an Indian. In his right hand he had a bread-knife, held butt to thumb, dagger-wise. Where he had come by the rust-bitten thing no one knows, least of all himself. In the broken light his eyes shone with a curious luminosity of their own, absorbed, introspective.

All the windows were dark, and the entrance-hall, when he slipped in between the pillars, but across its

floor he saw light thrown in a yellow ribbon from the half-closed door of the drawing-room.

It took his attention, laid hands on his imagination. He began to struggle against it.

He would *not* go into that room. He was going to another room. To stay him, he made a picture of the other room in his tumbled mind—the high, bleak walls, the bureau with the three candles burning wanly, the bed, the face of the man on the bed. And when his rebellious feet, surrendering him up to the lure of that beckoning ribbon, had edged as far as the door, and he had pushed it a little further ajar to get his head in, he saw that the face itself was there in the drawing-room.

He stood there for some time, his shoulder pressed against the door-jamb, his eyes blinking.

His slow attention moved from the face to the satin pillows that wedged it in, and then to the woman that must have been his mother, kneeling beside the casket with her arms crooked on the shining cover and her head down between them. And across from her leaned “Ugo,” the ‘cello, come down from his chamber to stand vigil at the other shoulder of the dead.

The first thing that came into his groping mind was a bitter sense of abandonment. The little core of candle-light hanging in the gloom left him out. Its unstimulating occupants, the woman, the ‘cello, and the clay, seemed sufficient to themselves. His mother had forgotten him. Even “Ugo,” that had grown part and parcel of his madness, had forgotten him.

Bruised, sullen, moved by some deep-lying instinct of the clan, his eyes left them and sought the wall beyond, where there were those who would not forget him, come what might, blood of his blood and mind of his own queer mind. And there among the shadowed faces he searched for one in vain. As if that candle-lit tableau, somehow holy and somehow abominable, were not for the eyes of one of them, the face of Daniel, the wedded husband, had been turned to the wall.

Here was something definite, something Christopher could take hold of, and something that he would not have.

His mother seemed not to have known he was near till he flung the door back and came stalking into the light with the rusty bread-knife in his hand. One would not have imagined there were blood enough left in her wasted heart, but her face went crimson when she lifted it and saw him.

It brought him up short—the blush, where he had looked for fright. It shocked him, and, shocking him, more than by a thousand laboured words of explanation, it opened a window in his disordered brain. He stood gawking with the effort of thought, hardly conscious of his mother's cry:

"Christopher, I never meant you to know!"

He kept on staring at the ashen face between the pillows, long (as his own was long), sensitive, worn; and at the 'cello keeping incorruptible vigil over its dead. And then slowly his eyes went down to his own left hand, to which that same old wine-brown creature had come home from the first with a curious sense of fitness and authority and right.

"Who is this man?"

"Don't look at me so! Don't, Chris!"

But he did look at her. Preoccupied as he was, he was appalled at sight of the damage the half-dozen of days had done. She had been so much the lady, so perfectly the gentlewoman. To no one had the outward gesture and symbol of purity been more precious. No whisper had ever breathed against her. If there had been secrets behind her, they had been dead; if a skeleton, the closet had been closed. And now, looking down on her, he was not only appalled, he was a little sickened, as one might be to find squalor and decay creeping into a familiar and once immaculate room.

"Who is this man?" he repeated.

"He grew up with me." She half raised herself on her knees in the eagerness of her appeal. "We were boy and girl together at home in Maryland. We were meant for each other, Chris. We were always to marry—always, Chris. And when I went away, and when I married your—when I married Daniel Kain, *he*

hunted and he searched and he found me here. He was with me, he stood by me through that awful year—and—that was how it happened. I tell you, Christopher, darling, we were meant for each other, John Sanderson and I. He loved me more than poor Daniel ever did or could, loved me enough to throw away a life of promise, just to hang on here after every one else was gone, alone with his 'cello and his one little memory. And I loved him enough to—to—*Christopher, don't look at me so!*"

His eyes did not waver. You must remember his age, the immaculate, ruthless, mid-Victorian 'teens; and you must remember his bringing-up.

"And so this was my father," he said. And then he went on without waiting, his voice breaking into falsetto with the fierceness of his charge. "And you would have kept on lying to me! If I hadn't happened, just happened, to find you here, now, you would have gone on keeping me in the dark! You would have stood by and seen me—well—*go crazy!* Yes, go crazy, thinking I was—well, thinking I was meant for it! And all to save your precious——"

She was down on the floor again, what was left of the gentlewoman, wailing.

"But you don't know what it means to a woman, Chris! You don't know what it means to a woman!"

A wave of rebellion brought her up and she strained toward him across the coffin.

"Isn't it something, then, that I gave you a father with a *mind?* And if you think you've been sinned against, think of *me!* Sin! You call it *sin!* Well, isn't it *anything at all* that by my 'sin' my son's blood came down to him *clean?* Tell me that!"

He shook himself, and his flame turned to sullenness.

"It's not so," he glowered.

All the girl in him, the poet, the hero-worshipping boy, rebelled. His harassed eyes went to the wall beyond and the faces there, the ghosts of the doomed, glorious, youth-ridden line, priceless possessions of his dreams. He would not lose them: he refused to be robbed of a tragic birthright. He wanted some gesture

puissant enough to turn back and blot out all that had been told him.

"It's not his!" he cried. And reaching out fiercely he dragged the 'cello away from the coffin's side. He stood for an instant at bay, bitter, defiant.

"It's not his! It's mine! It's—it's—*ours!*"

And then he fled out into the dark of the entrance-hall and up the black stairs. In his room there was no moonlight now, for the cloud ran over the sky and the rain had come.

"It isn't so, it isn't so!" It was like a sob in his throat.

He struck on the full strings. And listening breathless through the dying discord he heard the liquid whispers of the rain, nothing more. He lashed with a wild bow, time and again. But something was broken, something was lost: out of the surf of sound he could no longer fashion the measure of marching feet. The mad Kains had found him out, and cast him out. No longer could he dream them in dreams or run naked-hearted with them in the flood of the moon; for he was no blood of theirs, and they were gone. And huddling down on the edge of the bed, he wept.

The tears washed his eyes and falling down bathed his strengthless hands. And beyond the phantom windows, over the marsh and the moor and the hill that were not his, the graves of strangers and the lost Willow Wood, lay the healing rain. He heard it in gurgling rivulets along the gutters overhead. He heard the soft impact, like a kiss, brushing the reedy cheeks of the marsh, the showery shouldering of branches, the aspiration of myriad drinking grasses, the far whisper of waters coming home to the waters of the sea—the long, low melody of the rain.

And by and by he found it was "Ugo," the 'cello, and he was playing.

They went home the following afternoon, he and his mother. Or rather, she went home, and he with her as far as the Junction, where he changed for school.

They had not much to say to each other through the journey. The boy had to be given time. Five years

younger, or fifteen years older, it would have been easier for him to look at his mother. You must remember what his mother had meant to him, and what, bound up still in the fierce and sombre battle of adolescence, she must mean to him now.

As for Agnes Kain, she did not look at him, either. Through the changing hours her eyes rested on the transparent hands lying crossed in her lap. She seemed very tired and very white. Her hair was not done as tidily, her lace cuffs were less fresh than they had used to be. About her whole presence there was a troubling hint of let-down, something obscurely slovenly, a kind of awkward and unlovely nakedness.

She really spoke to him for the first time at the Junction, when he stood before her, slim and uncouth under the huge burden of "Ugo," fumbling through his leave-taking.

"Christopher," she said, "try not to think of me—always—as—as—well, when you're older, Christopher, you'll know what I mean."

That was the last time he ever heard her speak. He saw her once again, but the telegram was delayed and his train was late, and when he came beside her bed she said nothing. She looked into his eyes searchingly, for a long while, and died.

That space stands for the interval of silence that fell after Christopher had told me the story. I thought he had quite finished. He sat motionless, his shoulders fallen forward, his eyes fixed in the heart of the incandescent globe over the dressing-table, his long fingers wrapped around the neck of the 'cello.

"And so she got me through those years," he said. "Those nip-and-tuck years that followed. By her lie."

"Insanity is a queer thing," he went on, still brooding into the light. "There's more of it about than we're apt to think. It works in so many ways. In hobbies, arts, philosophies. Music is a kind of insanity. I know. I've got mine penned up in the music now, and I think I can keep it there now, and save my soul."

"Yours?"

"Yes, mine. I know now—now that it's safe for me to know. I was down at that village by the beach a year or so ago. I'm a Kain, of course, one of the crazy Kains, after all. John Sanderson was born in the village and lived there till his death. Only once that folks could remember had he been away, and that was when he took some papers to the city for Mrs. Kain to sign. He was caretaker at the old 'Kain place' the last ten years of his life, and deaf, they said, since his tenth year—'deaf as a post.' And they told me something else. They said there was a story that before my father, Daniel, married her, my mother had been an actress. An actress! You'll understand that I needed no one to tell me *that*!

"They told me that they had heard a story that she was a *great* actress. Dear God, if they could only know! When I think of that night and that setting, that scene! It killed her, and it got me over the wall——"

THEY GRIND EXCEEDING SMALL

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

From Saturday Evening Post

I TELEPHONED down the hill to Hazen Kinch. "Hazen," I asked, "are you going to town to-day?" "Yes, yes," he said abruptly in his quick, harsh fashion. "Of course I'm going to town."

"I've a matter of business," I suggested.

"Come along," he invited brusquely. "Come along."

There was not another man within forty miles to whom he would have given that invitation.

"I'll be down in ten minutes," I promised him; and I went to pull on my Pontiacs and heavy half boots over them and started downhill through the sandy snow. It was bitterly cold; it had been a cold winter. The bay—I could see it from my window—was frozen over for a dozen miles east and west and thirty north and south; and that had not happened in close to a score of years. Men were freighting across to the islands with heavy teams. Automobiles had beaten a rough road along the course the steamers took in summer. A man who had ventured to stock one of the lower islands with foxes for the sake of their fur, counting on the water to hold them prisoners, had gone bankrupt when his stock in trade escaped across the ice. Bitterly cold and steadily cold, and deep snow lay upon the hills, blue-white in the distance. The evergreens were blue-black blotches on this whiteness. The birches, almost indistinguishable, were like trees in camouflage. To me the hills are never so grand as in this winter coat they wear. It is easy to believe that a brooding God dwells upon them. I wondered as I ploughed my way down to Hazen Kinch's farm whether God did indeed

dwelt among these hills; and I wondered what He thought of Hazen Kinch.

This was no new matter of thought with me. I had given some thought to Hazen in the past. I was interested in the man and in that which should come to him. He was, it seemed to me, a problem in fundamental ethics; he was, as matters stood, a demonstration of the essential uprightness of things as they are. The biologist would have called him a sport, a deviation from type, a violation of all the proper laws of life. That such a man should live and grow great and prosper was not fitting; in a well-regulated world it could not be. Yet Hazen Kinch did live; he had grown—in his small way—great; and by our lights he had prospered. Therefore I watched him. There was about the man the fascination which clothes a tight-rope walker above Niagara; an aeronaut in the midst of the nose dive. The spectator stares with half-caught breath, afraid to see and afraid to miss seeing the ultimate catastrophe. Sometimes I wondered whether Hazen Kinch suspected this attitude on my part. It was not impossible. There was a cynical courage in the man; it might have amused him. Certainly I was the only man who had in any degree his confidence.

I have said there was not another within forty miles whom he would have given a lift to town; I doubt if there was another man anywhere for whom he would have done this small favour.

He seemed to find a mocking sort of pleasure in my company.

When I came to his house he was in the barn harnessing his mare to the sleigh. The mare was a good animal, fast and strong. She feared and she hated Hazen. I could see her roll her eyes backward at him as he adjusted the traces. He called to me without turning:

"Shut the door! Shut the door! Damn the cold!"

I slid the door shut behind me. There was within the barn the curious chill warmth which housed animals generate to protect themselves against our winters.

"It will snow," I told Hazen. "I was not sure you would go."

He laughed crookedly, jerking at the trace.

"Snow!" he exclaimed. "A man would think you were personal manager of the weather. Why do you say it will snow?"

"The drift of the clouds—and it's warmer," I told him.

"I'll not have it snowing," he said, and looked at me and cackled. He was a little, thin, old man with meager whiskers and a curious precision of speech; and I think he got some enjoyment out of watching my expression at such remarks as this. He elaborated his assumption that the universe was conducted for his benefit, in order to see my silent revolt at the suggestion. "I'll not have it snowing," he said. "Open the door."

He led the mare out and stopped by the kitchen door.

"Come in," he said. "A hot drink."

I went with him into the kitchen. His wife was there, and their child. The woman was lean and frail; and she was afraid of him. The countryside said he had taken her in payment of a bad debt. Her father had owed him money which he could not pay.

"I decided it was time I had a wife," Hazen used to say to me.

The child was on the floor. The woman had a drink of milk and egg and rum, hot and ready for us. We drank, and Hazen knelt beside the child. A boy baby, not yet two years old. It is an ugly thing to say, but I hated this child. There was evil malevolence in his baby eyes. I have sometimes thought the grey devils must have left just such hate-bred babes as this in France. Also, he was deformed—a twisted leg. The women of the neighbourhood sometimes said he would be better dead. But Hazen Kinch loved him. He lifted him in his arms now with a curious passion in his movement, and the child stared at him sullenly. When the mother came near the baby squalled at her, and Hazen said roughly:

"Stand away! Leave him alone!"

She moved back furtively; and Hazen asked me, displaying the child: "A fine boy, eh?"

I said nothing, and in his cracked old voice he mum-

bled endearments to the baby. I had often wondered whether his love for the child redeemed the man; or merely made him vulnerable. Certainly any harm that might come to the baby would be a crushing blow to Hazen.

He put the child down on the floor again and he said to the woman curtly: "Tend him well." She nodded. There was a dumb submission in her eyes; but through this blank veil I had seen now and then a blaze of pain.

Hazen went out of the door without further word to her, and I followed him. We got into the sleigh, bundling ourselves into the robes for the six-mile drive along the drifted road to town. There was a feeling of storm in the air. I looked at the sky and so did Hazen Kinch. He guessed what I would have said and he answered me before I could speak.

"I'll not have it snowing," he said, and leered at me.

Nevertheless, I knew the storm would come. The mare turned out of the barnyard and ploughed through a drift and struck hard-packed road. Her hoofs beat a swift tattoo; our runners sang beneath us. We dropped to the little bridge and across and began the mile-long climb to the top of Rayborn Hill. The road from Hazen's house to town is compounded of such ups and downs.

At the top of the hill we paused for a moment to breathe the mare; paused just in front of the big old Rayborn house, that has stood there for more years than most of us remember. It was closed and shuttered and deserted; and Hazen dipped his whip toward it and said meanly:

"An ugly, improvident lot, the Rayborns were."

I had known only one of them—the eldest son. A fine man, I had thought him. Picking apples in his orchard, he fell one October and broke his neck. His widow tried to make a go of the place, but she borrowed of Hazen and he had evicted her this three months back. It was one of the lesser evils he had done. I looked at the house and at him, and he clucked to the

mare and we dipped down into the steep valley below the hill.

The wind had a sweep in that valley and there was a drift of snow across it and across the road. This drift was well packed by the wind, but when we drove over its top our left-hand runner broke through the coaming and we tumbled into the snow, Hazen and I. We were well entangled in the rugs. The mare gave a frightened start, but Hazen had held the reins and the whip so that she could not break away. We got up together, he and I, and we righted the sleigh and set it upon the road again. I remember that it was becoming bitter cold and the sun was no longer shining. There was a steel-grey veil drawn across the bay.

When the sleigh was upright Hazen went forward and stood beside the mare. Some men, blaming the beast without reason, would have beaten her. They would have cursed, cried out upon her. That was not the cut of Hazen Kinch. But I could see that he was angry and I was not surprised when he reached up and gripped the horse's ear. He pulled the mare's head down and twisted the ear viciously. All in a silence that was deadly.

The mare snorted and tried to rear back and Hazen clapped the butt of his whip across her knees. She stood still, quivering, and he wrenched at her ear again.

"Now," he said softly, "keep the road."

And he returned and climbed to his place beside me in the sleigh. I said nothing. I might have interfered, but something had always impelled me to keep back my hand from Hazen Kinch.

We drove on and the mare was lame. Though Hazen pushed her, we were slow in coming to town and before we reached Hazen's office the snow was whirling down—a pressure of driving, swirling flakes like a heavy white hand.

I left Hazen at the stair that led to his office and I went about my business of the day. He said as I turned away:

"Be here at three."

I nodded. But I did not think we should drive home that afternoon. I had some knowledge of storms.

That which had brought me to town was not engrossing. I found time to go to the stable and see Hazen's mare. There was an ugly welt across her knees and some blood had flowed. The stablemen had tended the welt, and cursed Hazen in my hearing. It was still snowing, and the stable boss, looking out at the driving flakes, spat upon the ground and said to me:

"Them legs'll go stiff. That mare won't go home to-night."

"I think you are right," I agreed.

"The white-whiskered skunk!" he said, and I knew he spoke of Hazen.

At a quarter of three I took myself to Hazen Kinch's office. It was not much of an office; not that Hazen could not have afforded a better. But it was up two flights—an attic room ill lighted. A small air-tight stove kept the room stifling hot. The room was also air-tight. Hazen had a table and two chairs, and an iron safe in the corner. He put a pathetic trust in that safe. I believe I could have opened it with a screw-driver. I met him as I climbed the stairs. He said harshly:

"I'm going to telephone. They say the road's impassable."

He had no telephone in his office; he used one in the store below. A small economy fairly typical of Hazen.

"I'll wait in the office," I told him.

"Go ahead," he agreed, halfway down the stairs.

I went up to his office and closed the drafts of the stove—it was red-hot—and tried to open the one window, but it was nailed fast. Then Hazen came back up the stairs grumbling.

"Damn the snow!" he said. "The wire is down."

"Where to?" I asked.

"My house, man! To my house!"

"You wanted to telephone home that you——"

"I can't get home to-night. You'll have to go to the hotel."

I nodded good-naturedly.

"All right. You, too, I suppose."

"I'll sleep here," he said.

I looked round. There was no bed, no cot, nothing but the two stiff chairs. He saw my glance and said angrily: "I've slept on the floor before."

I was always interested in the man's mental processes.

"You wanted to telephone Mrs. Kinch not to worry?" I suggested.

"Pshaw, let her fret!" said Hazen. "I wanted to ask after my boy." His eyes expanded, he rubbed his hands a little, cackling. "A fine boy, sir! A fine boy!"

It was then we heard Doan Marshey coming up the stairs. We heard his stumbling steps as he began the last flight and Hazen seemed to cock his ears as he listened. Then he sat still and watched the door. The steps climbed nearer; they stopped in the dim little hall outside the door and someone fumbled with the knob. When the door opened we saw who it was. I knew Marshey. He lived a little beyond Hazen on the same road. Lived in a two-room cabin—it was little more—with his wife and his five children; lived meanly and pitifully, grovelling in the soil for daily bread, sweating life out of the earth—life and no more. A thin man, racking thin; a forward-thrusting neck and a bony face and a sad and drooping moustache about his mouth. His eyes were meek and weary.

He stood in the doorway blinking at us; and with his gloved hands—they were stiff and awkward with the cold—he unwound the ragged muffler that was about his neck and he brushed weakly at the snow upon his head and his shoulders. Hazen said angrily:

"Come in! Do you want my stove to heat the town?"

Doan shuffled in and he shut the door behind him. He said: "Howdy, Mr. Kinch." And he smiled in a humble and placating way.

Hazen said: "What's your business? Your interest is due."

Doan nodded.

"Yeah. I know, Mr. Kinch. I cain't pay it all."

Kinch exclaimed impatiently: "An old story! How much can you pay?"

"Eleven dollars and fifty cents," said Doan.

"You owe twenty."

"I aim to pay it when the hens begin to lay."

Hazen laughed scornfully.

"You aim to pay! Damn you, Marshey, if your old farm was worth taking I'd have you out in this snow. you old scamp!"

Doan pleaded dully: "Don't you do that, Mr. Kinch! I aim to pay."

Hazen clapped his hands on the table.

"Rats! Come! Give me what you've got! And. Marshey, you'll have to get the rest. I'm sick of waiting on you."

Marshey came shuffling toward the table. Hazen was sitting with the table between him and the man and I was a little behind Hazen at one side. Marshey blinked as he came nearer, and his weak nearsighted eyes turned from Hazen to me. I could see that the man was stiff with the cold.

When he came to the table in front of Hazen he took off his thick gloves. His hands were blue. He laid the gloves on the table and reached into an inner pocket of his torn coat and drew out a little cloth pouch and he fumbled into this and I heard the clink of coins. He drew out two quarters and laid them on the table before Hazen, and Hazen picked them up. I saw that Marshey's fingers moved stiffly; I could almost hear them creak with the cold. Then he reached into the pouch again.

Something dropped out of the mouth of the little cloth bag and fell soundlessly on the table. It looked to me like a bill, a piece of paper currency. I was about to speak, but Hazen, without an instant's hesitation, had dropped his hand on the thing and drawn it unostentatiously toward him. When he lifted his hand the money—if it was money—was gone.

Marshey drew out a little roll of worn bills. Hazen took them out of his hand and counted them swiftly.

"All right," he said. "Eleven-fifty. I'll give you a receipt. But you mind me, Doan Marshey, you get the rest before the month's out. I've been too slack with you."

Marshey, his dull eyes watching Hazen write the receipt, was folding the little pouch and putting it away. Hazen tore off the bit of paper and gave it to him. Doan took it and he said humbly: "Thank'e, sir."

Hazen nodded.

"Mind now," he exclaimed, and Marshey said: "I'll do my best, Mr. Kinch."

Then he turned and shuffled across the room and out into the hall and we heard him descending the stairs.

When he was gone I asked Hazen casually: "What was it that he dropped upon the table?"

"A dollar," said Hazen promptly. "A dollar bill. The miserable fool!"

Hazen's mental processes were always of interest to me.

"You mean to give it back to him?" I asked.

He stared at me and he laughed. "No! If he can't take care of his own money—that's why he is what he is."

"Still it is his money."

"He owes me more than that."

"Going to give him credit for it?"

"Am I a fool?" Hazen asked me. "Do I look like so much of a fool?"

"He may charge you with finding it."

"He loses a dollar; I find one. Can he prove ownership? Pshaw!" Hazen laughed again.

"If there is any spine in him he will lay the thing to you as a theft," I suggested. I was not afraid of angering Hazen. He allowed me open speech; he seemed to find a grim pleasure in my distaste for him and for his way of life.

"If there were any backbone in the man he would not be paying me eighty dollars a year on a five-hundred-dollar loan—discounted."

Hazen grinned at me triumphantly.

"I wonder if he will come back," I said.

"Besides," Hazen continued, "he lied to me. He told me the eleven-fifty was all he had."

"Yes," I agreed. "There is no doubt he lied to you."

Hazen had a letter to write and he bent to it. I sat by the stove and watched him and considered. He had

not yet finished the letter when we heard Marshey returning. His dragging feet on the stair were unmistakable. At the sound of his weary feet some tide of indignation surged up in me.

I was minded to do violence to Hazen Kinch. But—a deeper impulse held my hand from the man.

Marshey came in and his weary eyes wandered about the room. They inspected the floor; they inspected me; they inspected Hazen Kinch's table, and they rose at last humbly to Hazen Kinch.

"Well?" said Hazen.

"I lost a dollar," Marshey told him. "I 'lowed I might have dropped it here."

Hazen frowned.

"You told me eleven-fifty was all you had."

"This here dollar wa'n't mine."

The money-lender laughed.

"Likely! Who would give you a dollar? You lied to me, or you're lying now. I don't believe you lost a dollar."

Marshey reiterated weakly: "I lost a dollar."

"Well," said Hazen, "there's no dollar of yours here."

"It was to git medicine," Marshey said. "It wa'n't mine."

Hazen Kinch exclaimed: "By God, I believe you're accusing me!"

Marshey lifted both hands placatingly.

"No, Mr. Kinch. No, sir." His eyes once more wandered about the room. "Mebbe I dropped it in the snow," he said.

He turned to the door. Even in his slow shuffle there was a hint of trembling eagerness to escape. He went out and down the stairs. Hazen looked at me, his old face wrinkling mirthfully.

"You see?" he said.

I left him a little later and went out into the street. On the way to the hotel I stopped for a cigar at the drug store. Marshey was there, talking with the druggist.

I heard the druggist say: "No, Marshey, I'm sorry. I've been stung too often."

Marshey nodded humbly.

"I didn't 'low you'd figure to trust me," he agreed.
"It's all right. I didn't 'low you would."

It was my impulse to give him the dollar he needed, but I did not do it. An overpowering compulsion bade me keep my hands off in this matter. I did not know what I expected, but I felt the imminence of the fates. When I went out into the snow it seemed to me the groan of the gale was like the slow grind of millstones, one upon the other.

I thought long upon the matter of Hazen Kinch before sleep came that night.

Toward morning the snow must have stopped; and the wind increased and carved the drifts till sunrise, then abruptly died. I met Hazen at the postoffice at ten and he said: "I'm starting home."

I asked: "Can you get through?"

He laughed.

"I will get through," he told me.

"You're in haste."

"I want to see that boy of mine," said Hazen Kinch.
"A fine boy, man! A fine boy!"

"I'm ready," I said.

When we took the road the mare was limping. But she seemed to work out the stiffness in her knees and after a mile or so of the hard going she was moving smoothly enough. We made good time.

The day, as often happens after a storm, was full of blinding sunlight. The glare of the sun upon the snow was almost unbearable. I kept my eyes all but closed, but there was so much beauty abroad in the land that I could not bear to close them altogether. The snow clung to twigs and to fences and to wires, and a thousand flames glinted from every crystal when the sun struck down upon the drifts. The pine wood upon the eastern slope of Rayborn Hill was a checkerboard of rich colour. Green and blue and black and white, indescribably brilliant. When we crossed the bridge at the foot of the hill we could hear the brook playing beneath the ice that sheathed it. On the white pages of the snow wild things had writ here and there the fine-traced tale

of their morning's adventuring. We saw once where a fox had pinned a big snowshoe rabbit in a drift.

Hazen talked much of that child of his on the homeward way. I said little. From the top of the Rayborn Hill we sighted his house and he laid the whip along the mare and we went down that last long descent at a speed that left me breathless. I shut my eyes and huddled low in the robes for protection against the bitter wind, and I did not open them again till we turned into Hazen's barnyard, ploughing through the unpacked snow.

When we stopped Hazen laughed.

"Ha!" he said. "Now, come in, man, and warm yourself and see the baby! A fine boy!"

He was ahead of me at the door; I went in upon his heels. We came into the kitchen together.

Hazen's kitchen was also living-room and bedroom in the cold of winter. The arrangement saved firewood. There was a bed against the wall opposite the door. As we came in a woman got up stiffly from this bed and I saw that this woman was Hazen's wife. But there was a change in her. She was bleak as cold iron and she was somehow strong.

Hazen rasped at this woman impatiently: "Well, I'm home! Where is the boy?"

She looked at him and her lips moved soundlessly. She closed them, opened them again. This time she was able to speak.

"The boy?" she said to Hazen. "The boy is dead!"

The dim-lit kitchen was very quiet for a little time. I felt myself breathe deeply, almost with relief. The thing for which I had waited—it had come. And I looked at Hazen Kinch.

He had always been a little thin man. He was shrunken now and very white and very still. Only his face twitched. A muscle in one cheek jerked and jerked and jerked at his mouth. It was as though he controlled a desire to smile. That jerking, suppressed smile upon his white and tortured countenance was terrible. I could see the blood drain down from his forehead, down from his cheeks. He became white as death itself.

After a little he tried to speak. I do not know what he meant to say. But what he did was to repeat—as though he had not heard her words—the question which he had flung at her in the beginning. He said huskily: “Where is the boy?”

She looked toward the bed and Hazen looked that way; and then he went across to the bed with uncertain little steps. I followed him. I saw the little twisted body there. The woman had been keeping it warm with her own body. It must have been in her arms when we came in. The tumbled coverings, the crushed pillows spoke mutely of a ferocious intensity of grief.

Hazen looked down at the little body. He made no move to touch it, but I heard him whisper to himself: “Fine boy.”

After a while he looked at the woman. She seemed to feel an accusation in his eyes. She said: “I did all I could.”

He asked “What was it?”

I had it in me—though I had reason enough to despise the little man—to pity Hazen Kinch.

“He coughed,” said the woman. “I knew it was croup. You know I asked you to get the medicine—ipecac. You said no matter—no need—and you had gone.”

She looked out of the window.

“I went for help—to Annie Marshey. Her babies had had it. Her husband was gonig to town and she said he would get the medicine for me. She did not tell him it was for me. He would not have done it for you. He did not know. So I gave her a dollar to give him—to bring it out to me.

“He came home in the snow last night. Baby was bad by that time, so I was watching for Doan. I stopped him in the road and I asked for the medicine. When he understood he told me. He had not brought it.”

The woman was speaking dully, without emotion.

“It would have been in time, even then,” she said. “But after a while, after that, baby died.”

I understood in that moment the working of the mills. And when I looked at Hazen Kinch I saw that he, too,

was beginning to understand. There is a just mercilessness in an aroused God. Hazen Kinch was driven to questions.

"Why—didn't Marshey fetch it?" he asked.

She said slowly: "They would not trust him—at the store."

His mouth twitched, he raised his hands.

"The money!" he cried. "The money! What did he do with that?"

"He said," the woman answered, "that he lost it—in your office; lost the money there."

After a little the old money-lender leaned far back like a man wrenched with agony. His body was contorted, his face was terrible. His dry mouth opened wide.

He screamed!

Halfway up the hill to my house I stopped to look back and all round. The vast hills in their snowy garments looked down upon the land, upon the house of Hazen Kinch. Still and silent and inscrutable.

I knew now that a just and brooding God dwelt among these hills.

ON STRIKE

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

From The Popular Magazine

FURTHERMORE, howadji," ventured Najib, who had not spoken for fully half an hour, but had been poring over a sheaf of shipment items scribbled in Arabic, "furthermore, I am yearnful to know who was the unhappy person the wicked general threatened. Or, of a perhaps, it was that poor general himself who was bethreatened by his padishah or by the——"

"What on earth are you babbling about, Najib?" absent-mindedly asked Logan Kirby, as he looked up from a month-old New York paper which had arrived by muleteer that day and which the expatriated American had been reading with pathetic interest.

Now, roused from his perusal by Najib's query, Logan saw that the little Syrian had ceased wrestling with the shipment items and was peering over his employer's shoulder, his beady eyes fixed in keen curiosity on the printed page.

"I enseeched you to tell me, howadji," said Najib, "who has been threatening that poor general. Or, perchance, who has been made to cower himself underneath of that fierce general's threatenings. See, it is there, howadji. There, in the black line at the left top end of the news. See?"

Following the guidance of Najib's stubby, unwashed finger, Kirby read the indicated headline:

GENERAL STRIKE THREATENED

"Oh!" he answered, choking back a grin. "I see. There isn't any 'general,' Najib. And he isn't threatened. It means——"

"May the faces of all liars be blackened!" cried Najib in virtuous indignation. "And may the maker of the becurst newspaper lie be doubly afflicted! May his camels die and his wives cast dust upon his bared head! For he has befooled me, by what he has here enprinted. My heart went out with a sweet sorrowfulness for that poor general or for the folk he bethreatened. Whichever it might chance itself to be. And now the news person has made a jest of the truth. But he——"

Kirby's attempt at self-control went to pieces. He guffawed. Najib eyed him sourly; then said in icy reproof:

"It is known to all, howadji, that Sidi-ben-Hassan, the sheikh, was the wisest of men. And did not Sidi-ben-Hassan make known, in his book, that '*Laughter is for women and for hyenas*'? Furthermore——"

"I'm sorry I laughed at you, Najib," returned Kirby, with due penitence, "I don't wonder you got such an idea, from the headline. You see, I have read the story that goes under it. That's how I happen to know what it means. It means that several thousand workmen of several allied trades threatened to go on strike. That will tie up a lot of business, you see; along a lot of lines. It will mean a general tie-up—a——"

From Najib's blank face, the American saw his more or less technical explanation was going wide. Still remorseful at having hurt his factotum's feelings, Kirby laid the paper aside and undertook to simplify the matter.

"It's like this," said he. "We'll say a gang of men aren't satisfied with the pay or the hours they are getting. They asked for more money or for shorter hours; or for both. If the demand is refused, they stop working. They won't go back to their jobs till they get the cash and the hours they want. That is known as 'going on strike.' When a number of concerns are involved in it, it's sometimes called 'a general strike.' This paper says a general strike is threatened. That means——"

"I apperceive it, howadji!" exclaimed Najib. "I am onward to it, now. I might have known the printed

page cannot lie. But, oh, my heart berends itself when I think of the sad fate of those poor folk who do the stroking! Of an assuredly, Allah hath deprived them of wisdom!"

"Not necessarily," argued Kirby, wondering at his henchman's outburst of sympathy for union labourers so many thousand miles away. "They may win, you know; or, at least, get a compromise. And their unions will support them while they are out of work. Of course, they may lose. And then——"

"But when they make refusal to do their work," urged Najib, "will not the soldiers of the pasha cut them to ribbons with the kourbash and drive them back to their toil? Or if the pasha of that pashalik is a brute-some man, will not he cast those poor fellaheen into the prison and beseize their goods? And I answer, howadji, he will. Wherefore my eyes are tearing, for the men who have so unlucklessly——"

"Hold on!" exhorted Kirby; albeit despairing of opening the mind of a man whose forebears for thousands of years had lived in a land where the *corvée*—forced labour—was a hallowed institution; and where the money of employers could always enlist the aid of government soldiery to keep the fellaheen at their tasks. "Hold on! That sort of thing is dead and done with. Even in the East. Chinese Gordon stamped out the last of it, in Egypt, years ago. If a man doesn't want to work, he can't be forced to. All his boss can do is to fire him and try to get some one in his place. When a whole factory of men strike—especially if there are any big contract orders to fill in a rush—the employers sometimes find it cheaper to give them what they want than to call in untrained strikebreakers. On the other hand, sometimes, the boss can bring the men to terms. It all depends."

Yielding to the human joy of imparting instruction to so interested a listener, Kirby launched forth into an elaboration of his theme; trying to expound something of the capital-and-labour situation to his follower; and secretly wondering at the keen zest wherewith his words were listened to.

Seldom was Kirby so successful in making Najib follow so long an oration. And he was pleased with his own new-found powers of explaining Occidental customs to an Oriental mind.

Now, Logan Kirby knew the tangled Syrian character and its myriad queer slants, as well as it can be given to a white man to know it. Kirby's father had been a missionary, at Nablous. He himself had been born there, and had spent his boyhood at the mission. That was why—after he had completed his engineering course at Columbia's school of mines and had served an apprenticeship in Colorado and Arizona—the Cabell Smelting Company of New York had sent him out to the Land of Moab, as manager of its new-acquired little antimony mine.

The mine—a mere prospect shaft—was worked by about thirty fellaheen—native labourers—supervised by a native guard of twelve Turkish soldiers. Small as was the plant, it was a rich property and it was piling up dividends for the Cabells. Antimony, in the East, is used in a score of ways—from its employment in the form of kohl, for the darkening of women's eyes, to the chemical by-products, always in demand by Syrian apothecaries.

This was the only antimony mine between Aden and Germany. Its shipments were in constant demand. Its revenues were a big item on the credit side of the Cabell ledger.

Kirby's personal factotum, as well as superintendent of the mine, was this squat little Syrian, Najib, who had once spent two blissfully useless years with an All Nations Show, at Coney Island; and who there had picked up a language which he proudly believed to be English; and which he spoke exclusively when talking with the manager.

Kirby's rare knowledge of the East had enabled the mine to escape ruin a score of times where a manager less conversant with Oriental ways must have blundered into some fatal error in the handling of his men or in dealing with the local authorities.

Remember, please, that in the East it is the seemingly

insignificant things which bring disaster to the feringhee, or foreigner. For example, many an American or European has met unavenged death because he did not realize that he was heaping vile affront upon his Bedouin host by eating with his left hand. Many a foreign manager of labour has lost instant and complete control over his fellaheen by deigning to wash his own shirt in the near-by river or for brushing the dirt from his own clothes. Thereby he has proved himself a labourer, instead of a master of men. Many a foreigner has been shot or stabbed for speaking to a native whom he thought afflicted with a fit and who was really engaged in prayer. Many more have lost life or authority by laughing at the wrong time or by glancing—with entire absence of interest, perhaps—at some passing woman.

Yes, Kirby had been invaluable to his employers by virtue of his inborn knowledge of Syrian ways. Yet, now, he was not enough of an Oriental to understand why his lecture on the strike system should thrill his listener.

He did not pause to realize that the idea of strikes was one which carries a true appeal to the Eastern imagination. It has all the elements of revenge, of coercion, of trapping, of wily give-and-take, and of simple and logical gambling uncertainty; which characterize the most popular of the Arabian Nights yarns and which have made those tales remain as Syrian classics for more than ten centuries.

"It is of an assuredly a pleasing and noble plan," applauded Najib when Kirby finished the divers ramifications of his discourse. "And I do not misdoubt but what that cruel general betrembled himself inside of his boots when they threatened to strike. If the stroking ones may not be lawfully attacked by the pashalik troops, indeed must the general——"

"I told you there wasn't any general!" interrupted Kirby, jarred that his luminous explanations had still left Najib more or less where it found him, so far as any lucid idea was concerned. "And I've wasted enough time trying to ding the notion of the thing into your thick head. If you've got those shipment items cata-

logued, go back to the shaft and check off the inventory. The first load ought to be on the way to the coast before sunrise to-morrow. Chase!"

As he picked up the duplicate sets of the list and ran over their items once more, Kirby tried to forget his own silly annoyance at his failure to make the dull little Syrian comprehend a custom that had never reached the Land of Moab.

Presently, in his absorption in his work, the American forgot the whole incident. It was the beginning of a rush period at the mine—the busiest month in its history was just setting in. The Alexandretta-bound shipment of the morrow was but the first of twelve big shipments scheduled for the next twenty-nine days.

The restoration of peace and the shutting out of several Central European rivals had thrown an unprecedented sheaf of rush orders on the Cabell mine. It was such a chance as Kirby had longed for; a chance to show his rivals' customers the quality of the Cabell product and the speed and efficiency wherewith orders could and would be filled by him. If he could but fill these new customers' orders in quicker and more satisfactory fashion than the firms were accustomed to receiving, it might well mean that the new buyers would stick to the Cabells, after the other mines should again be in operation.

It was a big chance, as Kirby had explained at some length to Najib, during the past few weeks. At his behest, the little superintendent had used every known method to get extra work and extra speed out of the fellaheen; and, by judicious baksheesh, had even impressed to the toil several members of the haughty, Turkish guard and certain folk from the nearest hill village.

As a result, the first shipment was ready for the muleteers to carry coastward a full week ahead of schedule time. And the contract chanced to be one for which the eager wholesalers at Alexandretta had agreed to pay a bonus for early arrival. The men were even now busy getting a second shipment in shape for transportation by mule train to Tiberias and thence by railway to Damascus.

The work was progressing finely. Kirby thrilled at the thought. And he was just a little ashamed of his own recent impatience at Najib, when he remembered how the superintendent was pushing the relays of consignments along. After all, he mused, it was no reflection on Najib's intelligence that the poor little chap could not grasp the whole involved Occidental strike system in one hasty lecture; and that his simple mind clung to the delusion that there was some fierce general involved in it. In the Arabian Nights was there not always a scheming sultan or a baffled wazir, in every clash with the folk of the land? Was it unnatural that Najib should have substituted for these the mythical general of whom he thought he had seen mention in the news headline?

But, soon after dusk, Kirby had reason to know that his words had not all fallen on barren soil. At close of the working day, Najib had brought the manager the usual diurnal report from the mine. Now, after supper, Kirby, glancing over the report again, found a gap or two in the details. This was no novelty, the Syrian mind not lending itself readily to the compilation of terse yet complete reports. And occasionally Kirby was obliged to summon his henchman to correct or amend the day's tally sheet.

Wherefore, the list in his hand, the American strolled down from his own knoll-top tent toward Najib's quarters. As Najib was superintendent, and thus technically an official, Kirby could make such domiciliary visits without loss of prestige, instead of summoning the Syrian to his presence by handclap or by messenger, as would have been necessary in dealing with any of the other employees.

Najib's hut lay a hundred yards beyond the hollow where the fellaheen and soldiers were encamped. For Najib, too, had a dignity to uphold. He might no more lodge or break bread with his underlings than might Kirby with him. Yet, at times, preparatory to patterning up the knoll for his wonted evening chat with the American at the latter's campfire, Najib would so far unbend as to pause at the fellaheen's camp for a native discussion of many gestures and much loud talking.

So it was to-night. Just outside the radius of the fellaheen's firelight, Kirby paused. For he heard Najib's shrill voice uplifted in speech. And amusedly he halted and prepared to turn back. He had no wish to break in upon a harangue so interesting as the speaker seemed to find this one.

Najib's voice was pitched far above the tones of normal Eastern conversation;—louder and more excited even than that of a professional story-teller. In Syria it is hard to believe that these professionals are merely telling an oft-heard Arabian Nights narrative; and not indulging in delirium or apoplexy.

Yet at a stray word of Najib's, Kirby checked involuntarily his own retreat; and paused again to look back. There stood Najib, in the center of the firelit circle; hands and head in wild motion. Around him, spell-bound, squatted the ring of his dark-faced and unwashed hearers. The superintendent, being with his own people, was orating in pure Arabic—or, rather, in the colloquial vernacular which is as close to pure Arabic as one can expect to hear, except among the remoter Bedouins.

"Thus it is!" he was declaiming. "Even as I have sought to show you, oh, addle-witted offspring of mangy camels and one-eyed mules! In that far country, when men are dissatisfied with their wage, they take counsel together and they say, one unto the other: 'Lo, we shall labour no more, unless our hire be greater and our toil hours less!' Then go they to their sheikh or whomever he be who hath hired them, and they say to him: 'Oh, favoured of Allah, behold we must have such and such wage and such and such hours of labour!' Then doth their sheikh cast ashes upon his beard and rend his garments. For doth he not know his fate is upon him and that his breath is in his nostrils? Yet will they not listen to his prayers; but at once they make 'strike.'

"Then doth their sheikh betake himself to the pasha with his grievance; beseeching the pasha, with many rich gifts, that he will throw those strike-making labourers into prison and scourge their kinsmen with the kourbash. But the pasha maketh answer, with tears: 'Lo, I am helpless! What saith the law? It saith that a man

may make strike at will; and that his employer must pay what is demanded!' Now, this pasha is named 'General.' And his heart is as gall within him that he may not accept the rich gifts offered by the sheikh; and punish the labourers. Yet the law restraineth him. Then the sheikh, perchance, still refuseth the demands of his toilers. And they say to him then: 'If you will not employ us and on the terms we ordain, then shall ye hire none others, for we shall overthrow those whom you set in our places. And perchance we shall destroy your warehouses or barns or shops!' This say they, when they know he hath greatest need of them. Then boweth their master his head upon his breast and saith: 'Be it even as ye will, my hirelings! For I must obey!' And he giveth them, of his substance, whatsoever they may require. And all are glad. And under the new law, even in this land of ours, none may imprison or beat those who will not work. And all may demand and receive what wage they will. And——"

And Kirby waited to hear no more. With a groan of disgust at the orator's imbecility, he went back, up the hill, to his own tent.

There, he drew forth his rickety sea chair and placed it in front of a patch of campfire that twinkled in the open space in front of the tent door. For, up there in the hills, the nights had an edge of chill to them; be the days ever so hot.

Stretching himself out lazily in his long chair, Kirby exhumed from a shirt pocket his disreputable brier pipe, and filled and lighted it. The big white Syrian stars glinted down on him from a black velvet sky. Along the nearer peaks and hollows of the Moab Mountains, the knots of prowling jackals kept up a running chorus of yapping—a discordant chant punctuated now and then by the far-away howl of a hunting wolf; or, by the choking "laugh" of a hyena in the valley below, who thus gave forth the news of some especially delicious bit of carrion discovered among the rocks.

And Kirby was reminded of Najib's quoted dictum that "laughter is for women and for hyenas." The memory brought back to him his squat henchman's weird

jumbling of the strike system. And he smiled in reminiscent mirth.

The Syrian had been his comrade in many a vicissitude. And he knew that Najib's fondness for him was as sincere as can be that of any Oriental for a foreigner, an affection based not wholly on self-interest. Kirby enjoyed his evening powwows with the superintendent beside the campfire; and the little man's amazing faculty for mangling the English tongue.

He rather missed Najib's presence to-night. But he was not to miss it for long. Just as he was about to knock out his pipe and go to bed, the native came pattering up the slope on excitedly rapid feet; and squatted as usual on the ground beside the American's lounging chair. In Najib's manner there was a scarce-repressed jubilant thrill. His beady eyes shone wildly. Hardly had he seated himself when he broke the custom of momentary grave silence by blurting forth:

"Furthermore, howadji, I am the bearer of gladly tidings which will make you to beshout yourself aloud for joyfulness and leap about and besclaim: 'Pretty fair!' and other words of a grand rapture. For the bird will sing gleesome dirges in your heart!"

"Well?" queried Kirby in no especial excitement. "I'm listening. But if the news is really so wonderful you surely took your time in bringing it. I've been here all evening, while you've stayed below there, trying to increase those fellaheens' stock of ignorance. What's the idea?"

"Oh, I prythee you, do not let my awayness beget your goat, howadji!" pleaded Najib, ever sensitive to any hint of reproof from his master. "It was that which made the grand tidings. If I had not of been where I have been this evening—and doing what I have done—there would not be any tidings at all. I made the tidings myself. Both of them. And I made them for *you*. Is it that I may now tell them to you, howadji?"

"Go ahead," adjured Kirby, humouring the wistful eagerness of the man. "What's the news you have for me?"

"It is more than just a 'news,' howadji," corrected

Najib with jealous regard for shades of meaning. "It is a tidings. And it is this: You and my poor self and all the fellaheen and even those hell-selected pashalik soldiers—we are all to be rich. Most especially *you*, howadji. Wealthiness awaits us all. No longer shall any of us be downward and outward from povertude. No more shall any of us toil early and belatedly. We shall all live in easiness of hours and with much payment. *Inshallah! Alhandulillah!*" he concluded, his rising excitement for once bursting the carefully nourished bounds of English and overflowing into Arabic expletive.

Noting his own lapse into his native language, he looked sheepishly at Kirby, as though hoping the American had not heard the break. Then, with mounting eagerness, Najib struck the climax of his narrative.

"To speak with a briefness, howadji," he proclaimed grandiloquently. "We have all stroked ourselves!"

"You've all done—what?" asked the puzzled Kirby.

"Not we alone, howadji," amended Najib, "but you also! We would not berich ourselves and leave you outward in the plan. It is you also who are to stroke yourself. And——"

"For the love of Heaven!" exclaimed Kirby in sudden loss of patience. "What are you driving at? What do you mean about 'stroking yourselves'? Say it in Arabic. Then perhaps I can find what you mean."

"It is not to be said in the Arabic, howadji," returned Najib, wincing at this slur on his English. "For there is not such a thing in the Arabic as to make strike. We make strike. Thus I say it we 'stroke ourselves.' If it is the wrong way for saying it——"

"Strike?" repeated Kirby, perplexed. "What do you mean? Are you still thinking about what I told you to-day? If you are going——"

"I have bethought of it, howadji, ever since," was the reply. "And it is because of my much bethoughting that I found my splendorous plan. That is my tidings. I bethought it all out with tremense clearness and wisdom. Then I told those others, down yonder. At first they were of a stupidity. For it was so new. But at

last I made them understand. And they rejoiced of it. So it is all settled most sweetly. You may not fear that they will not stand by it. As soon as that was made sure I came to you to tell——”

“Najib!” groaned Kirby, his head awlirl. “*Will* you stop chewing chunks of indigestible language, and tell me what you are jabbering about? What was it you thought over? And what is ‘all settled’? What will——”

“The strike, of an assuredly,” explained Najib, as if in pity of his chief’s denseness. “To-night we make strike. All of us. That is one tiding. And you, too, make strike with us. That is the other tiding. Making two tidings. We make strike. To-morrow we all sleep late. No work is to be made. And so it shall be, on each dear and nice and happy day, until Cabell Effendi—be his sons an hundred and his wives true!—shall pay us the money we ask and make short our hours of toil. Then——”

Kirby sought to speak. But his breath was gone. He only gobbled. Taking the wordless sound for a token of high approval, Najib hastened on, more glibly, with his program.

“On the to-morrow’s morning, howadji,” he said, “we enseech that you will write a sorrowsome letter to Cabell Effendi, in the Broad Street of New York; and say to him that all of us have made strike and that we shall work no more until we have from his hands a writing that our payment shall be two mejidie for every mejidie we have been capturing from his company. Also and likewise that we shall work but half time. And that you, howadji, are to receive even as we; save only that *your* wage is to be enswollen to three times over than what it is now. And say to him, howadji, that unless he does our wish in this striking we shall slay all others whom he may behire in our place and that we shall dynamitely destroy that nice mine. Remind him, howadji—if perchance he does not know of such things—that the law is with us. Say, moreoverly, that there be many importanceful shipments and contracts just now. And say he will lose all if he be so bony of head as to refuse

us. Furthermore, howadji, tell him, I prythee you, that we——”

A veritable yell from Kirby broke in on the smug instructions. The American had recovered enough of his breath to expend a lungful of it in one profane bellow. In a flash he visualized the whole scene at the fellaheens' quarters—Najib's crazy explanation of the strike system and of the supposed immunity from punishment that would follow sabotage and other violence; the fellaheens' duller brains gradually seizing on the idea until it had become as much a part of their mucilaginous mentality as the Koran itself; and Najib's friendly desire that Kirby might share in the golden benefits of the new scheme.

Yes, the American grasped the whole thing at once; his knowledge of the East foretelling to him its boundless possibilities for mischief and for the ruin of the mine's new prosperity. He fairly strangled with the gust of wrath and impotent amaze which gripped him.

Najib smiled up at him as might a dog that had just performed some pretty new trick, or a child who has brought to its father a gift. But the aspect of Kirby's distorted face there in the dying firelight shocked the Syrian into a grunt of terror. Scrambling to his feet, he sputtered quaveringly.

“Tame yourself, howadji, I enseech you! Why are you not rejoiceful? Will it not mean much money for you; and——”

“You mangy brown rat!” shouted Kirby in fury. “What in blazes have you done? You know, as well as I do, that such an idea will never get out of those fellaheens' skulls, once it's really planted there. They'll believe every word of that wall-eyed rot you've been telling them! And they'll go on a *genuine* strike on the strength of it. They'll——”

“Of an assuredly, howadji, they will,” assented the bewildered Najib. “I made me very assured of that. Four times I told it all over to them, until even poor Imbarak—whose witfulness hath been beblown out from his brain by the breath of the Most High—until even Imbarak understood. But why it should enrouse you

to a lionsome raging I cannot think. I bethought you would be pleased——”

“Listen to me!” ordered Kirby, fighting hard for self-control and forcing himself to speak with unnatural slowness. “You’ve done more damage than if you had dynamited the whole mine and then turned a river into the shaft. This kind of news spreads. In a week there won’t be a worker east of the Jordan who won’t be a strike fan. And these people here will work the idea a step farther. I know them. They’ll decide that if one strike is good, two strikes are better. And they will strike every week—loafing between times.”

This prospect brought a grin of pure bliss to Najib’s swarthy face. He looked in new admiration upon his farsighted chief. Kirby went on:

“Not that that will concern us. For this present strike will settle the Cabell mine. It means ruin to our business here, and the loss of all your jobs, as well as my own. Why, you idiot, can’t you see what you’ve done? If you don’t take that asinine grin off your ugly face, I’ll knock it off!” he burst out, his hard-held patience momentarily fraying.

Then, taking new hold on his self-control, Kirby began again to talk. As if addressing a defective child, which, as a matter of fact, he was doing, he expounded the hideous situation.

He explained the disloyalty to the Cabells of such a move as Najib had planned. He pointed out the pride he and Najib had taken in the new business they had secured for the home office; and the fact that this new business had brought an increase of pay to them both as well as to the fellaheen. He showed how great a triumph for the mine was this vast increase of business; and the stark necessity of impressing the new customers by the promptitude and uniform excellence of all shipments. He pointed out the utter collapse to this and to all the rest of the mine’s connections which a strike would entail. Najib listened unmoved.

Hopeless of hammering American ethics into the brain of an Oriental, Kirby set off at a new angle. He explained the loss of prestige and position which he him-

self would suffer. He would be discharged—probably by cable—for allowing the mine's burgeoning prosperity to go to pieces in such fashion. Another and less lenient and understanding manager would be sent out to take his place. A manager whose first official act would probably be the discharging of Najib as the cause of the whole trouble.

Najib listened to this with a new interest, but with no great conviction.

Even Kirby's declaration that the ridiculous strike would be a failure, and that the government would assuredly punish any damage done to the Cabell property, did not serve to impress him. Najib was a Syrian. An idea, once firm-rooted in his mind, was loathe to let itself be torn thence by mere words. Kirby waxed desperate.

"You have wrecked this whole thing!" he stormed. "You got an idiotically wrong slant on what I told you about strikes to-day; and you have ruined us all. Even if you should go down there to the quarters this minute and tell the men that you were mistaken and that the strike is off—you know they wouldn't believe you. And you know they would go straight ahead with the thing. That's the Oriental of it. They'd refuse to go on working. And our shipments wouldn't be delivered. None of the ore for the next shipments would be mined. The men would just hang about, peacefully waiting for the double pay and the half time that you've promised them."

"Of an assuredly, that is true, howadji," conceded Najib. "They would——"

"They *will*!" corrected Kirby with grim hopelessness.

"But soon Cabell Effendi will reply to your letter," went on Najib. "And then the double paying——"

"To my letter!" mocked the raging Kirby.

Then he paused, a sudden inspiration smiting him.

"Najib," he continued after a minute of concentrated thought, "you have sense enough to know one thing: You have sense enough to know you people can't get that extra pay till I write to Mr. Cabell and demand it for you. There's not another one of you who can write

English. There's no one here but yourself who can speak or understand it or make shift to spell out a few English words in print. And Mr. Cabell doesn't know a word of Arabic—let alone the Arabic script. And your own two years at Coney Island must have shown you that no New Yorkers would know how to read an Arabic letter to him. Now, I swear to you, by every Christian and Moslem oath, that *I* shan't write such a letter! So how are you going to get word to him that you people are on strike and that you won't do another lick of work till you get double pay and half time? How are you going to do that?"

Najib's solid face went blank. Here at last was an argument that struck home. He had known Kirby for years, long enough to know that the American was most emphatically a man of his word. If Kirby swore he would not act as the men's intermediary with the company, then decisively Kirby would keep his oath. And Najib realized the futility of getting any one else to write such a letter in any language which the Cabell Smelting Company's home office would decipher.

He peered up at Kirby with disconsolate astonishment. Quick to take advantage of the change, the manager hurried on:

"Now, the men are on strike. That's understood. Well, what are you and they going to do about it? When the draft for the monthly pay roll comes to the bank, at Jerusalem, as usual, I shall refuse to indorse it. I give you my oath on that, too. I am not going to distribute the company's cash among a bunch of strikers. Without my signature, the bank won't cash the draft. You know that. Well, how are you going to live, all of you, on nothing a month? When the present stock of provisions gives out I'm not going to order them renewed. And the provision people in Jerusalem won't honour any one's order for them but mine. This is the only concern in Syria to-day that pays within forty per cent. of the wages you chaps are getting. With no pay and no food you're due to find your strike rather costly. For when the mine shuts down I'm going back to America. There'll be nothing to keep me here. I'll be ruined,

in any case. You people will find yourself without money or provisions. And if you go elsewhere for work it will be at pay that is only a little more than half what you are getting now. Your lookout isn't cheery, my striking friend!"

He made as though to go into his tent. After a brief pause of horror, Najib pattered hurriedly and beseechingly in his wake.

"Howadji!" pleaded the Syrian shakily. "*Howadji!* You would not, in the untamefulness of your mad, desertion us like that? Not *me*, at anyhow? Not me, who have loved you as Daoud the Emir loved Jonathan of old! You would not forsook me, to starve myself! *Aie! Ohé!*"

"Shut up that ungodly racket!" snapped Kirby, entering his tent and lighting his lamp, as the first piercing notes of the traditional mourner chant exploded through the unhappy Najib's wide-flung jaws. "Shut up! You'll start every hyena and jackal in the mountains to howling! It's bad enough as it is without adding a native concert to the rest of the mess."

"But, howadji!" pleaded Najib.

"*Tamán!*" growled Kirby, summarily speaking the age-hallowed Arabic word for the ending of all interviews.

"But I shall be beruinated, howadji!" tearfully insisted Najib.

Covertly the American watched his henchman while pretending to make ready for bed. If he had fully and permanently scared Najib into a conviction that the strike would spell ruin for the Syrian himself, then the little man's brain might possibly be jarred into one of its rare intervals of uncanny craftiness; and Najib might hit upon some way of persuading the fellaheen that the strike was off.

This was Kirby's sole hope. And he knew it. Unless the fellaheen could be so convinced, it meant the strike would continue until it should break the mine as well as the mine's manager. Kirby knew of no way to persuade the men. The same arguments which had crushed Najib would mean nothing to them. All their brains

could master at one time, without the aid of some uprooting shock, was that henceforth they were to get double pay and half labour.

A calm fatalism of hopelessness, bred perhaps of his long residence in the homeland of fatalism, began to creep over Kirby. In one hour his golden ambitions for the mine and for himself had been smashed. At best he saw no hope of getting the obsessed mine crew to work soon enough to save his present contracts. He would be lucky if, on non-receipt of their demanded increase, they did not follow Najib's muddled preachments to the point of sabotage.

The more he thought of it, the less possible did it seem to Kirby that Najib could undo the damage he had so blithely done. Ordering the blubbering little fellow out of the tent and refusing to speak or listen further, Kirby went to bed.

Oddly enough, he slept. There was nothing to worry about. When a man's job or fortune are imperilled sleep vanishes. But after the catastrophe what sense is there in lying awake? Depression and nervous fatigue threw Kirby into a troubled slumber. Only once in the night was he roused.

Perhaps two hours before dawn he started up at sound of a humble scratching at the open door flap of his tent. On the threshold cowered Najib.

"Furthermore, howadji," came the Syrian's woe-begone voice through the gloom, "could I borrow me a book if I shall use it with much carefulness?"

Too drowsy to heed the absurdity of such a plea at such an hour, Kirby grumbled a surly assent, and dozed again as he heard Najib rumbling, in the dark, among the shelves of the packing-box bookcase in a far corner of the tent. Here were stored nearly a hundred old volumes which had once been a part of the missionary library belonging to Kirby's father at Nablous. A few years earlier, at the moving of the mission, the dead missionary's scanty library had been shipped across country to his son.

Kirby awoke at greyest daylight. Through force of habit he woke at this hour; in spite of the workless day

which he knew confronted him. It was his custom to get up and take his bath in the rain cistern at this time, and to finish dressing just as the men piled out for the morning's work.

Yet now the first sounds that smote his ears as he opened his eyes were the rhythmic creak of the mine windlass and the equally rhythmic, if less tuneful, chant of the men who were working it:

"All-ah sa-eed!—Ne-bi sa-eed! Ohé! Sa-eed! Sa-eed! Sa-EED!"

In the distance, dying away, he heard the plodding hoofs of a string of pack mules. From the direction of the mine came the hoodlum racket which betokens, in Syria, the efforts of a number of honest labourers to perform their daily tasks in an efficient and orderly way.

Kirby, in sleepy amaze, looked at his watch in the dim dawn light. He saw it was still a full half hour before the men were due to begin work. And by the sounds he judged that the day's labour was evidently well under way. Yes, and to-day there was to have been no work done!

Kirby jumped out of bed and strode dazedly to his tent door. At the mine below him his fellaheen were as busy as so many dirty and gaudy bees. Even the lordly lazy Turkish soldiers were lending a hand at windlass and crane. Over the nick of the pass, leading toward Jerusalem, the last animal of a mule train was vanishing. Najib, who had as usual escorted the departing shipment of ore to the opening in the pass, was trotting back toward camp.

At sight of Kirby in the tent door the little superintendent veered from his course toward the mine and increased his pace to a run as he bore down upon the American. Najib's swart face was aglow. But his eyes were those of a man who has neglected to sleep. His cheeks still bore flecks of the dust he had thrown on his head when Kirby had explained the wreck of his scheme and of his future. There, in all likelihood, the dust smears would remain until the next rain should wash them off. But, beyond these tokens of recent

mental strife, Najib's visage shone like a full moon that is streaked by dun dust clouds.

"Furthermore, howadji!" he hailed his chief as soon as he was within earshot, "the shipment for Alexandretta is on its wayward—over than an hour earlier than it was due to bestart itself. And those poor hell-selected fellaheen are betoiling themselves grand. Have I done well, oh, howadji?"

"Najib!" stammered Kirby, still dazed.

"And here is that most sweet book of great worthiness and wit, which I borrowed me of you in the night, howadji," pursued Najib, taking from the soiled folds of his abieh a large old volume, bound in stout leather, after the manner of religious or scientific books of a half-century ago. On the brown back a scratched gold lettering proclaimed the gruesome title:

"Martyrs of Ancient and Modern Error."

Well did Kirby know the tome. Hundreds of times, as a child, had he sat on the stone floor of his father's cell-like mission study at Nablous, and had pored in shuddering fascination over its highly coloured illustrations. The book was a compilation—chiefly in the form of multichrome pictures with accompanying borders of text—of all the grisly scenes of martyrdom which the publishers had been able to scrape together from such classics as "Fox's Book of Martyrs" and the like. Twice this past year he had surprised Najib scanning the gruesome pages in frank delight.

"I betook the book to their campfire, howadji, and I smote upon my breast and I bewept me and I wailed aloud and I would not make comfort. Till at last they all awoken and they came out of their huts and they reviled at me for disturbing them as they slept themselves so happily. Then I spake much to them. And all the time I teared with my eyes and moaned aloudly."

"But," put in Kirby, "I don't see what this——"

"In a presently you shall, howadji. Yesterday I begot your goat. To-day I shall make you to frisk with peacefulness of heart. Those fellaheen cannot read. They are not of an education, as I am. And they know my wiseness in reading. For over than a trillion times

I have told them. And they believe. Pictures also they believe. Just as men of an education believe the printed word; knowing full well it could not be printed if it were not Allah's own truth. Well, these folk believe a picture, if it be in a book. So I showed them pictures. And I read the law which was beneath the pictures. They heard me read. And they saw the pictures with their own eyesight. So what could they do but believe? And they did. Behold, howadji!"

Opening the volume with respectful care, Najib thumbed the yellowing pages. Presently he paused at a picture which represented in glaring detail a stricken battlefield strewn with dead and dying Orientals of vivid costume. In the middle distance a regiment of prisoners was being slaughtered in singularly blood-thirsty fashion. The caption, above the cut, read:

"Destruction of Sennacherib's Assyrian Hosts, by the People of Israel."

"While yet they gazed joyingly on this noble picture," remarked Najib, "I read to them the words of the law about it. I read aloudly, thus: 'This shall be the way of punishing all folk who make strike hereafter this date.' Then," continued Najib, "I showed to them another pretty and splendid picture. See!"

"Martyrdom of John Rogers, His Wife and Their Nine Children."

"And," proclaimed Najib, "of this sweet portrait I read thus the law: 'So shall the wives and the offsprings of all strike-makers be put to death; and those wicked strike-makers themselves along with them.' By the time I had shown them six or fifteen of such pictures and read them the law for each of them, those miserable fellaheen and guards were beweeeping themselves harder and louder and sadder than I had seemed to. Why, howadji, it was with a difficultness that I kept them from running away and enhiding themselves in the mountains, lest the soldiers of the pasha come upon them at once and punish them for trying to make strike! But I said I would intercede with you to make you merciful of heart toward them, to spare them and not to tell the law what they had so sinsomely planned to

do. I said I would do this, for mine own sake as well as for theirs, and that I knew I could wake you to pity. But I said it would perchance soften your heart toward them, if all should work harder to atone themselves for the sin they had beplotted. Wherefore, howadji, they would consent to sleep no more; but they ran henceforthly and at once to the mine. They have been onto the job ever since. And, howadji, they are jobbing harder than ever I have seen men bejob themselves. Am I forgiven, howadji?" he finished timidly.

"Forgiven!" yelled Kirby, when he could speak. "Why, you eternal little liar, you're a genius! My hat is off to you! This ought to be worth a fifty-mejidie bonus. And——"

"Instead of the bonus, howadji," ventured Najib, scared at his own audacity, yet seeking to take full advantage of this moment of expansiveness, "could I have this pleasing book as a baksheesh gift?"

"Take it!" vouchsafed Kirby. "The thing gives me bad dreams. Take it!"

"May the houris make soft your bed in the Paradise of the Prophet!" jabbered Najib, in a frenzy of gratitude, as he hugged the treasured gift to his breast. "And—and, howadji, there be more pictures I did not show. They will be of a nice convenience, if ever again it be needsome to make a new law for the mine."

"But——"

"Oh, happy and pretty decent hour!" chortled the little man, petting his beloved volume as if it were a loved child and executing a shuffling and improvised step-dance of unalloyed rapture. "This book has been donated to me because I was brave enough to request for it while yet your heart was warm at me, howadji. It is even as your sainted feringhee proverb says: 'Never put off till to-morrow the—the—man who may be done, to-day!'"



THE ELEPHANT REMEMBERS

By EDISON MARSHALL

From *Everybody's Magazine*

AN elephant is old on the day he is born, say the natives of Burma, and no white man is ever quite sure just what they mean. Perhaps they refer to his pink, old-gentleman's skin and his droll, fumbling, old-man ways and his squeaking treble voice. And maybe they mean he is born with a wisdom such as usually belongs only to age. And it is true that if any animal in the world has had a chance to acquire knowledge it is the elephant, for his breed are the oldest residents of this old world.

They are so old that they don't seem to belong to the twentieth century at all. Their long trunks, their huge shapes, all seem part of the remote past. They are just the remnants of a breed that once was great.

Long and long ago, when the world was very young indeed, when the mountains were new, and before the descent of the great glaciers taught the meaning of cold, they were the rulers of the earth, but they have been conquered in the struggle for existence. Their great cousins, the mastodon and the mammoth, are completely gone, and their own tribe can now be numbered by thousands.

But because they have been so long upon the earth, because they have wealth of experience beyond all other creatures, they seem like venerable sages in a world of children. They are like the last veterans of an old war, who can remember scenes and faces that all others have forgotten.

Far in a remote section of British India, in a strange, wild province called Burma, Muztagh was born. And although he was born in captivity, the property of a

mahout, in his first hour he heard the far-off call of the wild elephants in the jungle.

The Burmans, just like the other people of India, always watch the first hour of a baby's life very closely. They know that always some incident will occur that will point, as a weather-vane points in the wind, to the baby's future. Often they have to call a man versed in magic to interpret, but sometimes the prophecy is quite self-evident. No one knows whether or not it works the same with baby elephants, but certainly this wild, far-carrying call, not to be imitated by any living voice, did seem a token and an omen in the life of Muztagh. And it is a curious fact that the little baby lifted his ears at the sound and rocked back and forth on his pillar legs.

Of all the places in the great world, only a few remain wherein a captive elephant hears the call of his wild brethren at birth. Muztagh's birthplace lies around the corner of the Bay of Bengal, not far from the watershed of the Irawadi, almost north of Java. It is strange and wild and dark beyond the power of words to tell. There are great dark forests, unknown, slow-moving rivers, and jungles silent and dark and impenetrable.

Little Muztagh weighed a flat two hundred pounds at birth. But this was not the queerest thing about him. Elephant babies, although usually weighing not more than one hundred and eighty, often touch two hundred. The queerest thing was a peculiarity that probably was completely overlooked by his mother. If she saw it out of her dull eyes, she took no notice of it. It was not definitely discovered until the mahout came out of his hut with a lighted fagot for a first inspection.

He had been wakened by the sound of the mother's pain. "*Hai!*" he had exclaimed to his wife. "Who has ever heard a cow bawl so loud in labour? The little one that to-morrow you will see beneath her belly must weigh more than you!"

This was rather a compliment to his plump wife. She was not offended at all. Burman women love to be well-rounded. But the mahout was not weighing

the effect of his words. He was busy lighting his fire-brand, and his features seemed sharp and intent when the beams came out. Rather he was already weighing the profits of little Muztagh. He was an elephant-catcher by trade, in the employ of the great white Dugan Sahib, and the cow that was at this moment bringing a son into the world was his own property. If the baby should be of the Kumiria——

The mahout knew elephants from head to tail, and he was very well acquainted with the three grades that compose that breed. The least valuable of all are the Mierga—a light, small-headed, thin-skinned, weak-trunked and unintelligent variety that are often found in the best elephant herds. They are often born of the most noble parents, and they are as big a problem to elephant men as razor-backs to hog-breeders. Then there is a second variety, the Dwasala, that compose the great bulk of the herd—a good, substantial, strong, intelligent grade of elephant. But the Kumiria is the best of all; and when one is born in a captive herd it is a time for rejoicing. He is the perfect elephant—heavy, symmetrical, trustworthy and fearless—fitted for the pageantry of kings.

He hurried out to the lines, for now he knew that the baby was born. The mother's cries had ceased. The jungle, dark and savage beyond ever the power of man to tame, lay just beyond. He could feel its heavy air, its smells; its silence was an essence. And as he stood, lifting the fagot high, he heard the wild elephants trumpeting from the hills.

He turned his head in amazement. A Burman, and particularly one who chases the wild elephants in their jungles, is intensely superstitious, and for an instant it seemed to him that the wild trumpeting must have some secret meaning, it was so loud and triumphant and prolonged. It was greatly like the far-famed elephant salute—ever one of the mysteries of those most mysterious of animals—that the great creatures utter at certain occasions and times.

“Are you saluting this little one?” he cried. “He is not a wild tusker like you. He is not a wild pig of the

jungle. He is born in bonds, such as you will wear too, after the next drive!"

They trumpeted again, as if in scorn of his words. Their great strength was given them to rule the jungle, not to haul logs and pull chains! The man turned back to the lines and lifted higher his light.

Yes—the little elephant in the light-glow was of the Kumiria. Never had there been a more perfect calf. The light of greed sprang again in his eyes. And as he held the fagot nearer so that the beams played in the elephant's eyes and on his coat, the mahout sat down and was still, lest the gods observe his good luck, and, being jealous, turn it into evil.

The coat was not pinky dark, as is usual in baby elephants. It was distinctly light-coloured—only a few degrees darker than white.

The man understood at once. In the elephants, as well as in all other breeds, an albino is sometimes born. A perfectly white elephant, up to a few years ago, had never been seen, but on rare occasions elephants are born with light-coloured or clouded hides. Such creatures are bought at fabulous prices by the Malay and Siamese princes, to whom a white elephant is the greatest treasure that a king can possess.

Muztagh was a long way from being an albino, yet a tendency in that direction had bleached his hide. And the man knew that on the morrow Dugan Sahib would pay him a lifetime's earnings for the little wobbly calf, whose welcome had been the wild cries of the tuskers in the jungle.

II

Little Muztagh (which means White Mountain in an ancient tongue) did not enjoy his babyhood at all. He was born with the memory of jungle kingdoms, and the life in the elephant lines almost killed him with dullness.

There was never anything to do but nurse of the strong elephant milk and roam about in the *keddah* or along the lines. He had been bought the second day of his life by Dugan Sahib, and the great white heaven-

born saw to it that he underwent none of the risks that are the happy fate of most baby elephants. His mother was not taken on the elephant drives into the jungles, so he never got a taste of this exciting sport. Mostly she was kept chained in the lines, and every day Langur Dass, the low-caste hillman in Dugan's employ, grubbed grass for her in the valleys. All night long, except the regular four hours of sleep, he would hear her grumble and rumble and mutter discontent that her little son shared with her.

Muztagh's second year was little better. Of course he had reached the age where he could eat such dainties as grass and young sugar-cane, but these things could not make up for the fun he was missing in the hills. He would stand long hours watching their purple tops against the skies, and his little dark eyes would glow. He would see the storms break and flash above them, behold the rains lash down through the jungles, and he was always filled with strange longings and desires that he was too young to understand or to follow. He would see the white haze steam up from the labyrinth of wet vines, and he would tingle and scratch for the feel of its wetness on his skin. And often, when the mysterious Burman night came down, it seemed to him that he would go mad. He would hear the wild tuskers trumpeting in the jungles a very long way off, and all the myriad noises of the mysterious night, and at such times even his mother looked at him with wonder.

"Oh, little restless one," Langur Dass would say, "thou and that old cow thy mother and I have one heart between us. We know the burning—we understand, we three!"

It was true that Langur Dass understood more of the ways of the forest people than any other hillman in the encampment. But his caste was low, and he was drunken and careless and lazy beyond words, and the hunters had mostly only scorn for him. They called him Langur after a grey-bearded breed of monkeys along the slopes of the Himalayas, rather suspecting he was cursed with evil spirits, for why should any sane man have such mad ideas as to the rights of elephants? He never wanted

to join in the drives—which was a strange thing indeed for a man raised in the hills. Perhaps he was afraid—but yet they could remember a certain day in the bamboo thickets, when a great, wild buffalo had charged their camp and Langur Dass acted as if fear were something he had never heard of and knew nothing whatever about.

One day they asked him about it. “Tell us, Langur Dass,” they asked, mocking the ragged, dejected-looking creature, “if thy name speaks truth, thou art brother to many monkey-folk, and who knows the jungle better than thou or they? None but the monkey-folk and thou canst talk with my lord the elephant. *Hai!* We have seen thee do it, Langur Dass. How is it that when we go hunting, thou art afraid to come?”

Langur looked at them out of his dull eyes, and evaded their question just as long as he could. “Have you forgotten the tales you heard on your mothers’ breasts?” he asked at last. “Elephants are of the jungle. You are of the cooking-pots and thatch! How should such folk as ye are understand?”

This was flat heresy from their viewpoint. There is an old legend among the elephant-catchers to the effect that at one time men were subject to the elephants.

Yet mostly the elephants that these men knew were patient and contented in their bonds. Mostly they loved their mahouts, gave their strong backs willingly to toil, and were always glad and ready to join in the chase after others of their breed. Only on certain nights of the year, when the tuskers called from the jungles, and the spirit of the wild was abroad, would their love of liberty return to them. But to all this little Muztagh was distinctly an exception. Even though he had been born in captivity, his desire for liberty was with him just as constantly as his trunk or his ears.

He had no love for the mahout that rode his mother. He took little interest in the little brown boys and girls that played before his stall. He would stand and look over their heads into the wild, dark heart of the jungle that no man can ever quite understand. And being only a beast, he did not know anything about the caste and

prejudices of the men he saw, but he did know that one of them, the low-caste Langur Dass, ragged and dirty and despised, wakened a responsive chord in his lonely heart.

They would have long talks together, that is, Langur would talk and Muztagh would mumble. "Little calf, little fat one," the man would say, "can great rocks stop a tree from growing? Shall iron shackles stop a prince from being king? Muztagh—jewel among jewels! Thy heart speaks through those sleepless eyes of thine! Have patience—what thou knowest, who shall take away from thee?"

But most of the mahouts and catchers noticed the rapidity with which the little Muztagh acquired weight and strength. He outweighed, at the age of three, any calf of his season in the encampment by a full two hundred pounds. And of course three in an elephant is no older than three in a human child. He was still just a baby, even if he did have the wild tuskers' love of liberty.

"Shalt thou never lie the day long in the cool mud, little one? Never see a storm break on the hills? Nor feel a warm rain dripping through the branches? Or are these matters part of thee that none may steal?" Langur Dass would ask him, contented to wait a very long time for his answer. "I think already that thou knowest how the tiger steals away at thy shrill note; how thickets feel that crash beneath thy hurrying weight! A little I think thou knowest how the madness comes with the changing seasons. How knowest thou these things? Not as I know them, who have seen—nay, but as a king knows conquering; it's in thy blood! Is a bundle of sugar-cane tribute enough for thee, Kumiria? Shall purple trappings please thee? Shall some fat rajah of the plains make a beast of burden of thee? Answer, lord of mighty memories!"

And Muztagh answered in his own way, without sound or emphasis, but giving his love to Langur Dass, a love as large as the big elephant heart from which it had sprung. No other man could even win his friendship. The smell of the jungle was on Langur Dass.

The mahouts and hunters smelt more or less of civilization and were convinced for their part that the disposition of the little light-coloured elephant was beyond redemption.

"He is a born rogue," was their verdict, and they meant by that, a particular kind of elephant, sometimes a young male, more often an old and savage tusker, alone in the jungle—apart from the herd. Solitariness doesn't improve their dispositions, and they were generally expelled from a herd for ill-temper to begin with. "Woe to the fool prince who buys this one!" said the grey-beard catchers. "There is murder in his eyes."

But Langur Dass would only look wise when he heard these remarks. He knew elephants. The gleam in the dark eyes of Muztagh was not viciousness, but simply inheritance, a love of the wide wild spaces that left no room for ordinary friendships.

But calf-love and mother-love bind other animals as well as men, and possibly he might have perfectly fulfilled the plans Dugan had made for him but for a mistake the sahib made in the little calf's ninth year.

He sold Muztagh's mother to an elephant-breeder from a distant province. Little Muztagh saw her march away between two tuskers—down the long elephant trail into the valley and the shadow.

"Watch the little one closely to-night," Dugan Sahib said to his mahout. So when they had led him back and forth along the lines, they saw that the ends of his ropes were pegged down tightly. They were horse-hair ropes, far beyond the strength of any normal nine-year-old elephant to break. Then they went to the huts and to their women and left him to shift restlessly from foot to foot, and think.

Probably he would have been satisfied with thinking, for Muztagh did not know his strength, and thought he was securely tied. The incident that upset the mahout's plans was simply that the wild elephants trumpeted again from the hills.

Muztagh heard the sound, long drawn and strange from the silence of the jungle. He grew motionless. The great ears pricked forward, the whipping tail stood

still. It was a call never to be denied. The blood was leaping in his great veins.

He suddenly rocked forward with all his strength. The rope spun tight, hummed, and snapped—very softly indeed. Then he padded in silence out among the huts, and nobody who had not seen him do it would believe how silently an elephant can move when he sees fit.

There was no thick jungle here—just soft grass, huts, approaching dark fringe that was the jungle. None of the mahouts was awake to see him. No voice called him back. The grass gave way to bamboo thickets, the smell of the huts to the wild, bewitching perfumes of the jungle.

Then, still in silence, because there are decencies to be observed by animals no less than men, he walked forward with his trunk outstretched into the primordial jungle and was born again.

III

Muztagh's reception was cordial from the very first. The great bulls of the herd stood still and lifted their ears when they heard him grunting up the hill. But he slipped among them and was forgotten at once. They had no dealings with the princes of Malay and Siam, and his light-coloured coat meant nothing whatever to them. If they did any thinking about him at all, it was just to wonder why a calf with all the evident marks of a nine-year-old should be so tall and weigh so much.

One can fancy that the great old wrinkled tusker that led the herd peered at him now and then out of his little red eyes, and wondered. A herd-leader begins to think about future contestants for his place as soon as he acquires the leadership. But *Hai!* This little one would not have his greatest strength for fifteen years.

It was a compact, medium-sized herd—vast males, mothers, old-maid elephants, long-legged and ungainly, young males just learning their strength and proud of it beyond words, and many calves. They ranged all the way in size from the great leader, who stood ten feet and weighed nearly nine thousand pounds, to little two-

hundred-and-fifty-pound babies that had been born that season. And before long the entire herd began its cautious advance into the deeper hills.

The first night in the jungle—and Muztagh found it wonderful past all dreams. The mist on his skin was the same cool joy he had expected. There were sounds, too, that set his great muscles aquiver. He heard the sound that the bamboos make—the little click-click of the stems in the wind—the soft rustle and stir of many leafy tendrils entwining and touching together, and the whisper of the wind over the jungle grass. And he knew, because it was his heritage, what every single one of these sounds meant.

The herd threaded through the dark jungle, and now they descended into a cool river. A herd of deer—either the dark sambur or black buck—sprang from the misty shore-line and leaped away into the bamboos. Farther down, he could hear the grunt of buffalo.

It was simply a caress—the touch of the soft, cool water on his flanks. Then they reared out, like great sea-gods rising from the deep, and grunted and squealed their way up the banks into the jungle again.

But the smells were the book that he read best; he understood them even better than the sounds of green things growing. Flowers that he could not see hung like bells from the arching branches. Every fern and every seeding grass had its own scent that told sweet tales. The very mud that his four feet sank into emitted scent that told the history of jungle-life from the world's beginnings. When dawn burst over the eastern hills, he was weary in every muscle of his young body, but much too happy to admit it.

This day was just the first of three thousand joyous days. The jungle, old as the world itself, is ever new. Not even the wisest elephant, who, after all, is king of the jungle, knows what will turn up at the next bend in the elephant trail. It may be a native woodcutter, whose long hair is stirred with fright. It may easily be one of the great breed of bears, large as the American grizzly, that some naturalists believe are to be found in the Siamese and Burman jungles. It may be a herd

of wild buffalo, always looking for a fight, or simply some absurd armadillo-like thing, to make him shake his vast sides with mirth.

The herd was never still. They ranged from one mysterious hill to another, to the ranges of the Himalayas and back again. There were no rivers that they did not swim, no jungles that they did not penetrate, no elephant trails that they did not follow, in the whole northeastern corner of British India. And all the time Muztagh's strength grew upon him until it became too vast a thing to measure or control.

Whether or not he kept with the herd was by now a matter of supreme indifference to him. He no longer needed its protection. Except for the men who came with the ropes and guns and shoutings, there was nothing in the jungle for him to fear. He was twenty years old, and he stood nearly eleven feet to the top of his shoulders. He would have broken any scales in the Indian Empire that tried to weigh him.

He had had his share of adventures, yet he knew that life in reality had just begun. The time would come when he would want to fight the great arrogant bull for the leadership of the herd. He was tired of fighting the young bulls of his own age. He always won, and to an elephant constant winning is almost as dull as constant losing. He was a great deal like a youth of twenty in any breed of any land—light-hearted, self-confident, enjoying every minute of wakefulness between one midnight and another. He loved the jungle smells and the jungle sounds, and he could even tolerate the horrible laughter of the hyenas that sometimes tore to shreds the silence of the grassy plains below.

But India is too thickly populated by human beings for a wild elephant to escape observation entirely. Many natives had caught sight of him, and at last the tales reached a little circle of trackers and hunters in camp on a distant range of hills. They did not work for Dugan Sahib, for Dugan Sahib was dead long since. They were a determined little group, and one night they sat and talked softly over their fire. If Muztagh's ears had been sharp enough to hear their words across the

space of hills, he wouldn't have gone to his mud-baths with such complacency the next day. But the space between them was fifty miles of sweating jungle, and of course he did not hear.

"You will go, Khusru," said the leader, "for there are none here half so skilful with horsehair rope as you. If you do not come back within twelve months, we shall know you have failed."

Of course all of them knew what he meant. If a man failed in the effort to capture a wild elephant by the hair-rope method, he very rarely lived to tell of it.

"In that case," Ahmad Din went on, "there will be a great drive after the monsoon of next year. Picked men will be chosen. No detail will be overlooked. It will cost more, but it will be sure. And our purses will be fat from the selling-price of this king of elephants with a white coat!"

IV

There is no need to follow Khusru on his long pursuit through the elephant trails. He was an able hunter and, after the manner of the elephant-trackers, the scared little man followed Muztagh through jungle and river, over hill and into dale, for countless days, and at last, as Muztagh slept, he crept up within a half-dozen feet of him. He intended to loop a horsehair rope about his great feet—one of the oldest and most hazardous methods of elephant-catching. But Muztagh awakened just in time.

And then a curious thing happened. The native could never entirely believe it, and it was one of his best stories to the day he died. Any other wild tusker would have charged in furious wrath, and there would have been a quick and certain death beneath his great knees. Muztagh started out as if he had intended to charge. He lifted his trunk out of the way—the elephant trunk is for a thousand uses, but fighting is not one of them—and sprang forward. He went just two paces. Then his little eyes caught sight of the brown figure fleeing through the bamboos. And at once the elephant set

his great feet to brake himself, and drew to a sliding halt six feet beyond.

He did not know why. He was perfectly aware that this man was an enemy, jealous of his most-loved liberty. He knew perfectly it was the man's intention to put him back into his bonds. He did not feel fear, either—because an elephant's anger is too tremendous an emotion to leave room for any other impulse such as fear. It seemed to him that memories came thronging from long ago, so real and insistent that he could not think of charging.

He remembered his days in the elephant lines. These brown creatures had been his masters then. They had cut his grass for him in the jungle, and brought him bundles of sugar-cane. The hill people say that the elephant memory is the greatest single marvel in the jungle, and it was that memory that saved Khusru then. It wasn't deliberate gratitude for the grass-cutting of long ago. It wasn't any particular emotion that he could reach out his trunk and touch. It was simply an impulse—another one of the thousand mysteries that envelop, like a cloud, the mental processes of these largest of forest creatures.

These were the days when he lived apart from the herd. He did it from choice. He liked the silence, the solitary mud-baths, the constant watchfulness against danger.

One day a rhino charged him—without warning or reason. This is quite a common thing for a rhino to do. They have the worst tempers in the jungle, and they would just as soon charge a mountain if they didn't like the look of it. Muztagh had awakened the great creature from his sleep, and he came bearing down like a tank over "no man's land."

Muztagh met him squarely, with the full shock of his tusks, and the battle ended promptly. Muztagh's tusk, driven by five tons of might behind it, would have pierced a ship's side, and the rhino limped away to let his hurt grow well and meditate revenge. Thereafter, for a full year, he looked carefully out of his bleary, drunken eyes and chose a smaller objective before he charged.

Month after month Muztagh wended alone through the elephant trails, and now and then rooted up great trees just to try his strength. Sometimes he went silently, and sometimes like an avalanche. He swam alone in the deep holes, and sometimes shut his eyes and stood on the bottom, just keeping the end of his trunk out of the water. One day he was obliged to kneel on the broad back of an alligator who tried to bite off his foot. He drove the long body down into the muddy bottom, and no living creature, except possibly the catfish that burrow in the mud, ever saw it again.

He loved the rains that flashed through the jungles, the swift-climbing dawns in the east, the strange, tense, breathless nights. And at midnight he loved to trumpet to the herd on some far-away hill, and hear, fainter than the death-cry of a beetle, its answer come back to him. At twenty-five he had reached full maturity; and no more magnificent specimen of the elephant could be found in all of British India. At last he had begun to learn his strength.

Of course he had known for years his mastery over the inanimate things of the world. He knew how easy it was to tear a tree from its roots, to jerk a great tree-limb from its socket. He knew that under most conditions he had nothing to fear from the great tigers, although a fight with a tiger is a painful thing and well to avoid. But he did not know that he had developed a craft and skill that would avail him in battle against the greatest of his own kind. He made the discovery one sunlit day beside the Manipur River.

He was in the mud-bath, grunting and bubbling with content. It was a bath with just room enough for one. And seeing that he was young, and perhaps failing to measure his size, obscured as it was in the mud, a great "rogue" bull came out of the jungles to take the bath for himself.

He was a huge creature—wrinkled and yellow-tusked and scarred from the wounds of a thousand fights. His little red eyes looked out malignantly, and he grunted all the insults the elephant tongue can compass to the youngster that lolled in the bath. He confidently ex-

pected that Muztagh would yield at once, because as a rule young twenty-five-year-olds do not care to mix in battle with the scarred and crafty veterans of sixty years. But he did not know Muztagh.

The latter had been enjoying the bath to the limit, and he had no desire whatever to give it up. Something hot and raging seemed to explode in his brain and it was as if a red glare, such as sometimes comes in the sunset, had fallen over all the stretch of river and jungle before his eyes. He squealed once, reared up with one lunge out of the bath—and charged. They met with a shock.

Of all the expressions of power in the animal world, the elephant fight is the most terrible to see. It is as if two mountains rose up from their roots of strata and went to war. It is terrible to hear, too. The jungle had been still before. The river glided softly, the wind was dead, the mid-afternoon silence was over the thickets.

The jungle people were asleep. A thunder-storm would not have broken more quickly, or could not have created a wilder pandemonium. The jungle seemed to shiver with the sound.

They squealed and bellowed and trumpeted and grunted and charged. Their tusks clicked like the noise of a giant's game of billiards. The thickets cracked and broke beneath their great feet.

It lasted only a moment. It was so easy, after all. In a very few seconds indeed, the old rogue became aware that he had made a very dangerous and disagreeable mistake. There were better mud-baths on the river, anyway.

He had not been able to land a single blow. And his wrath gave way to startled amazement when Muztagh sent home his third. The rogue did not wait for the fourth.

Muztagh chased him into the thickets. But he was too proud to chase a beaten elephant for long. He halted, trumpeting, and swung back to his mud-bath.

But he did not enter the mud again. All at once he remembered the herd and the fights of his calfhood. All at once he knew that his craft and strength and power

were beyond that of any elephant in all the jungle. Who was the great, arrogant herd-leader to stand against him? What yellow tusks were to meet his and come away unbroken?

His little eyes grew ever more red as he stood rocking back and forth, his trunk lifted to catch the sounds and smells of the distant jungle. Why should he abide alone, when he could be the ruler of the herd and the jungle king? Then he grunted softly and started away down the river. Far away, beyond the mountains and rivers and the villages of the hillfolk, the herd of his youth roamed in joyous freedom. He would find them and assert his mastery.

V

The night fire of a little band of elephant-catchers burned fitfully at the edge of the jungle. They were silent men—for they had lived long on the elephant trails—and curiously scarred and sombre. They smoked their cheroots, and waited for Ahmad Din to speak.

"You have all heard?" he asked at last.

All but one of them nodded. Of course this did not count the most despised one of them all—old Langur Dass—who sat at the very edge of the shadow. His long hair was grey, and his youth had gone where the sun goes at evening. They scarcely addressed a word to him, or he to them. True, he knew the elephants, but was he not possessed of evil spirits? He was always without rupees, too, a creature of the wild that could not seem to understand the gathering of money. As a man, according to the standards of men, he was an abject failure.

"Khusru has failed to catch White-Skin, but he has lived to tell many lies about it. He comes to-night."

It was noticeable that Langur Dass, at the edge of the circle, pricked up his ears.

"Do you mean the white elephant of which the Manipur people tell so many lies?" he asked. "Do you, skilled catchers that you are, believe that such an elephant is still wild in the jungle?"

Ahmad Din scowled. "The Manipur people tell of him, but for once they tell the truth," was the reply. "He is the greatest elephant, the richest prize, in all of Burma. Too many people have seen him to doubt. I add my word to theirs, thou son of immorality!"

Ahmad Din hesitated a moment before he continued. Perhaps it was a mistake to tell of the great, light-coloured elephant until this man should have gone away. But what harm could this wanderer do them? All men knew that the jungle had maddened him.

Langur Dass's face lit suddenly. "Then it could be none but Muztagh, escaped from Dugan Sahib fifteen years ago. That calf was also white. He was also overgrown for his years."

One of the trackers suddenly gasped. "Then that is why he spared Khusru!" he cried. "He remembered men."

The others nodded gravely. "They never forget," said Langur Dass.

"You will be silent while I speak," Ahmad Din went on. Langur grew silent as commanded, but his thoughts were flowing backward twenty years, to days at the elephant lines in distant hills. Muztagh was the one living creature that in all his days had loved Langur Dass. The man shut his eyes, and his limbs seemed to relax as if he had lost all interest in the talk. The evil one took hold of him at such times, the people said, letting understanding follow his thoughts back into the purple hills and the far-off spaces of the jungle. But to-night he was only pretending. He meant to hear every word of the talk before he left the circle.

"He tells a mad story, as you know, of the elephant sparing him when he was beneath his feet," Ahmad Din went on; "that part of his story does not matter to us. *Hai!* He might have been frightened enough to say that the sun set at noon. But what matters to us more is that he knows where the herd is—but a day's journey beyond the river. And there is no time to be lost."

His fellows nodded in agreement.

"So to-morrow we will break camp. There can be no mistake this time. There must be no points over-

looked. The chase will cost much, but it will return a hundredfold. Khusru says that at last the white one has started back toward his herd, so that all can be taken in the same *keddah*. And the white sahib that holds the license is not to know that White-Coat is in the herd at all."

The circle nodded again, and contracted toward the speaker.

"We will hire beaters and drivers, the best that can be found. To-morrow we will take the elephants and go."

Langur Dass pretended to waken. "I have gone hungry many days," he said. "If the drive is on, perhaps you will give your servant a place among the beaters."

The circle turned and stared at him. It was one of the stories of Langur Dass that he never partook in the elephant hunts. Evidently poor living had broken his resolutions.

"You shall have your wish, if you know how to keep a closed mouth," Ahmad Din replied. "There are other hunting parties in the hills."

Langur nodded. He was very adept indeed at keeping a closed mouth. It is one of the first lessons of the jungle.

For another long hour they sat and perfected their plans. Then they lay down by the fire together, and sleep dropped over them one by one. At last Langur sat by the fire alone.

"You will watch the flame to-night," Ahmad Din ordered. "We did not feed you to-night for pity on your grey hairs. And remember—a gipsy died in a tiger's claws on this very slope—not six months past."

Langur Dass was left alone with his thoughts. Soon he got up and stole out into the velvet darkness. The mists were over the hills as always.

"Have I followed the tales of your greatness all these years for this?" he muttered. "It is right for pigs with the hearts of pigs to break their backs in labour. But you, my Muztagh! Jewel among elephants! King of the jungle! Thou art of the true breed! Moreover I am minded that thy heart and mine are one!

"Thou art born ten thousand years after thy time, Muztagh," he went on. "Thou art of the breed of masters, not of slaves! We are of the same womb, thou and I. Can I not understand? These are not my people—these brown men about the fire. I have not thy strength, Muztagh, or I would be out there with thee! Yet is not the saying that brother shall serve brother?"

He turned slowly back to the circle of the firelight. Then his brown, scrawny fingers clenched.

"Am I to desert my brother in his hour of need? Am I to see these brown pigs put chains around him, in the moment of his power? A king, falling to the place of a slave? Muztagh, we will see what can be done! Muztagh, my king, my pearl, my pink baby, for whom I dug grass in the long ago! Thy Langur Dass is old, and his whole strength is not that of thy trunk, and men look at him as a worm in the grass. But *hai!* perhaps thou wilt find him an ally not to be despised!"

VI

The night had just fallen, moist and heavy over the jungle, when Muztagh caught up with his herd. He found them in an open grassy glade, encircled by hills, and they were all waiting, silent, as he sped down the hills toward them. They had heard him coming a long way. He was not attempting silence. The jungle people had not got out of his way.

The old bull that led the herd, seventy years of age and at the pride of his wisdom and strength, scarred, yellow-tusked and noble past any elephant patriarch in the jungle, curled up his trunk when he saw him come. He knew very well what would happen. And because no one knows better than the jungle people what a good thing it is to take the offensive in all battles, and because it was fitting his place and dignity, he uttered the challenge himself.

The silence dropped as something from the sky. The little pink calves who had never seen the herd grow still in this same way before, felt the dawn of the storm that they could not understand, and took shelter beneath

their mothers' bellies. But they did not squeal. The silence was too deep for them to dare to break.

It is always an epoch in the life of the herd when a young bull contests for leadership. It is a much more serious thing than in the herds of deer and buffalo. The latter only live a handful of years, then grow weak and die. A great bull who has attained strength and wisdom enough to obtain the leadership of an elephant herd may often keep it for forty years. Kings do not rise and fall half so often as in the kingdoms of Europe. For, as most men know, an elephant is not really old until he has seen a hundred summers come and go. Then he will linger fifty years more, wise and grey and wrinkled and strange and full of memories of a time no man can possibly remember.

Long years had passed since the leader's place had been questioned. The aristocracy of strength is drawn on quite inflexible lines. It would have been simply absurd for an elephant of the Dwasila or Mierga grades to covet the leadership. They had grown old without making the attempt. Only the great Kumiria, the grand dukes in the aristocracy, had ever made the trial at all. And besides, the bull was a better fighter after thirty years of leadership than on the day he had gained the honour.

The herd stood like heroic figures in stone for a long moment—until Muztagh had replied to the challenge. He was so surprised that he couldn't make any sound at all at first. He had expected to do the challenging himself. The fact that the leader had done it shook his self-confidence to some slight degree. Evidently the old leader still felt able to handle any young and arrogant bulls that desired his place.

Then the herd began to shift. The cows drew back with their calves, the bulls surged forward, and slowly they made a hollow ring, not greatly different from the pugilistic ring known to fight-fans. The calves began to squeal, but their mothers silenced them. Very slowly and grandly, with infinite dignity, Muztagh stamped into the circle. His tusks gleamed. His eyes glowed red. And those appraising old bulls in the ring knew that such

an elephant had not been born since the time of their grandfathers.

They looked him over from tail to trunk. They marked the symmetrical form, the legs like mighty pillars, the sloping back, the wide-apart, intelligent eyes. His shoulders were an expression of latent might—power to break a tree-trunk at its base; by the conformity of his muscles he was agile and quick as a tiger. And knowing these things, and recognizing them, and honouring them, devotees of strength that they were, they threw their trunks in the air till they touched their foreheads and blared their full-voiced salute.

They gave it the same instant—as musicians strike the same note at their leader's signal. It was a perfect explosion of sound, a terrible blare, that crashed out through the jungles and wakened every sleeping thing. The dew fell from the trees. A great tawny tiger, lingering in hope of an elephant calf, slipped silently away. The sound rang true and loud to the surrounding hills and echoed and re-echoed softer and softer, until it was just a tiny tremour in the air.

Not only the jungle folk marvelled at the sound. At an encampment three miles distant Ahmad Din and his men heard the wild call, and looked with wondering eyes upon each other. Then out of the silence spoke Langur Dass.

"My lord Muztagh has come back to his herd—that is his salute," he said.

Ahmad Din looked darkly about the circle. "And how long shall he stay?" he asked.

The trap was almost ready. The hour to strike had almost come.

Meanwhile the grand old leader stamped into the circle, seeming unconscious of the eyes upon him, battle-scarred and old. Even if this fight were his last, he meant to preserve his dignity.

Again the salute sounded—shattering out like a thunderclap over the jungle. Then challenger and challenged closed.

At first the watchers were silent. Then as the battle grew ever fiercer and more terrible, they began to grunt

and squeal, surging back and forth, stamping the earth and crashing the underbrush. All the jungle-folk for miles about knew what was occurring. And Ahmad Din wished his *keddah* were completed, for never could there be a better opportunity to surround the herd than at the present moment, when they had forgotten all things except the battling monsters in the centre of the ring.

The two bulls were quite evenly matched. The patriarch knew more of fighting, had learned more wiles, but he had neither the strength nor the agility of Muztagh. The late twilight deepened into the intense dark, and the stars of midnight rose above the eastern hills.

All at once, Muztagh went to his knees. But as might a tiger, he sprang aside in time to avoid a terrible tusk blow to his shoulder. And his counter-blow, a lashing cut with the head, shattered the great leader to the earth. The elephants bounded forward, but the old leader had a trick left in his trunk. As Muztagh bore down upon him he reared up beneath, and almost turned the tables. Only the youngster's superior strength saved him from immediate defeat.

But as the night drew to morning, the bulls began to see that the tide of the battle had turned. Youth was conquering—too mighty and agile to resist. The rushes of the patriarch were ever weaker. He still could inflict punishment, and the hides of both of them were terrible to see, but he was no longer able to take advantage of his openings. Then Muztagh did a thing that reassured the old bulls as to his craft and wisdom. Just as a pugilist will invite a blow to draw his opponent within range, Muztagh pretended to leave his great shoulder exposed. The old bull failed to see the plot. He bore down, and Muztagh was ready with flashing tusk.

What happened thereafter occurred too quickly for the eyes of the elephants to follow. They saw the great bull go down and Muztagh stand lunging above him. And the battle was over.

The great leader, seriously hurt, backed away into the shadowed jungle. His trunk was lowered in token of defeat. Then the ring was empty except for a great red-

eyed elephant, whose hide was no longer white, standing blaring his triumph to the stars.

Three times the elephant salute crashed out into the jungle silence—the full-voiced salaam to a new king. Muztagh had come into his birthright.

VII

The *keddah* was built at last. It was a strong stockade, opening with great wings spreading out one hundred yards, and equipped with the great gate that lowered like a portcullis at the funnel end of the wings. The herd had been surrounded by the drivers and beaters, and slowly they had been driven, for long days, toward the *keddah* mouth. They had guns loaded with blank cartridges, and firebrands ready to light. At a given signal they would close down quickly about the herd, and stampede it into the yawning mouth of the stockade.

No detail had been overlooked. No expense had been spared. The profit was assured in advance, not only from the matchless Muztagh, but from the herd as well. The king of the jungle, free now as the winds or the waters, was about to go back to his chains. These had been such days! He had led the herd through the hills, and had known the rapture of living as never before. It had been his work to clear the trail of all dangers for the herd. It was his pride to find them the coolest watering-places, the greenest hills. One night a tiger had tried to kill a calf that had wandered from its mother's side. Muztagh lifted his trunk high and charged down with great, driving strides—four tons and over of majestic wrath. The tiger leaped to meet him, but the elephant was ready. He had met tigers before. He avoided the terrible stroke of outstretched claws, and his tusks lashed to one side as the tiger was in midspring. Then he lunged out, and the great knees descended slowly, as a hydraulic press descends on yellow apples. And soon after that the kites were dropping out of the sky for a feast.

His word was law in the herd. And slowly he began to overcome the doubt that the great bulls had of him

—doubt of his youth and experience. If he had had three months more of leadership, their trust would have been absolute. But in the meantime, the slow herding toward the *keddah* had begun.

"We will need brave men to stand at the end of the wings of the *keddah*," said Ahmad Din. He spoke no less than truth. The man who stands at the end of the wings, or wide-stretching gates, of the *keddah* is of course in the greatest danger of being charged and killed. The herd, mad with fright, is only slightly less afraid of the spreading wings of the stockade than of the yelling, whooping beaters behind. Often they will try to break through the circle rather than enter the wings.

"For two rupees additional I will hold one of the wings," replied old Langur Dass. Ahmad Din glanced at him—at his hard, bright eyes and determined face. Then he peered hard, and tried in vain to read the thoughts behind the eyes. "You are a madman, Langur Dass," he said wonderingly. "But thou shalt lie behind the right-wing men to pass them torches. I have spoken."

"And the two extra rupees?" Langur asked cunningly.

"Maybe." One does not throw away rupees in Upper Burma.

Within the hour the signal of "*Mail, mail!*" (Go on, go on!) was given, and the final laps of the drive began.

The hills grew full of sound. The beaters sprang up with firebrand and rifle, and closed swiftly about the herd. The animals moved slowly at first. The time was not quite ripe to throw them into a panic. Many times the herd would leave their trail and start to dip into a valley or a creek-bed, but always there was a new crowd of beaters to block their path. But presently the beaters closed in on them. Then the animals began a wild descent squarely toward the mouth of the *keddah*.

"*Hai!*" the wild men cried. "Oh, you forest pigs! On, on! Block the way through that valley, you brainless sons of jackals! Are you afraid? *Ai!* Stand close! Watch, Puran! Guard your post, Khusru! Now on, on—do not let them halt! *Arre! Aihai!*"

Firebrands waved, rifles cracked, the wild shout of

beaters increased in volume. The men closed in, driving the beasts before them.

But there was one man that did not raise his voice. Through all the turmoil and pandemonium he crouched at the end of the stockade wing, tense and silent and alone. To one that could have looked into his eyes, it would have seemed that his thoughts were far and far away. It was just old Langur Dass, named for a monkey and despised of men.

He was waiting for the instant that the herd would come thundering down the hill, in order to pass lighted firebrands to the bold men who held that corner. He was not certain that he could do the thing he had set out to do. Perhaps the herd would sweep past him, through the gates. If he did win, he would have to face alone the screaming, infuriated hillmen, whose knives were always ready to draw. But knives did not matter now. Langur Dass had only his own faith and his own creed, and no fear could make him betray them.

Muztagh had lost control of his herd. At their head ran the old leader that he had worsted. In their hour of fear they had turned back to him. What did this youngster know of elephant-drives? Ever the waving firebrands drew nearer, the beaters lessened their circle, the avenues of escape became more narrow. The yawning arms of the stockade stretched just beyond.

"Will I win, jungle gods?" a little grey man at the *keddah* wing was whispering to the forests. "Will I save you, great one that I knew in babyhood? Will you go down into chains before the night is done? *Ai!* I hear the thunder of your feet! The moment is almost here. And now—your last chance, Muztagh!"

"Close down, close down!" Ahmad Din was shouting to his beaters. "The thing is done in another moment. Hasten, pigs of the hills! Raise your voice! Now! *Aihai!*"

The herd was at the very wings of the stockade. They had halted an instant, milling, and the beaters increased their shouts. Only one of all the herd seemed to know the danger—Muztagh himself, and he had dropped from the front rank to the very rear. He stood with uplifted

trunk, facing the approaching rows of beaters. And there seemed to be no break in the whole line.

The herd started to move on, into the wings of captivity; and they did not heed his warning squeals to turn. The circle of fire drew nearer. Then his trunk seemed to droop, and he turned, too. He could not break the line. He turned, too, toward the mouth of the *keddah*.

But even as he turned, a brown figure darted toward him from the end of the wing. A voice known long ago was calling to him—a voice that penetrated high and clear above the babble of the beaters. “Muztagh!” it was crying. “Muztagh!”

But it was not the words that turned Muztagh. An elephant cannot understand words, except a few elemental sounds such as a horse or dog can learn. Rather it was the smell of the man, remembered from long ago, and the sound of his voice, never quite forgotten. For an elephant never forgets.

“Muztagh! Muztagh!”

The elephant knew him now. He remembered his one friend among all the human beings that he knew in his calfhood; the one mortal from whom he had received love and given love in exchange.

“More firebrands!” yelled the men who held that corner of the wing. “Firebrands! Where is Langur Dass?” but instead of firebrands that would have frightened beast and aided men, Langur Dass stepped out from behind a tree and beat at the heads of the right-wing guards with a bamboo cane that whistled and whacked and scattered them into panic—yelling all the while—“Muztagh! O my Muztagh! Here is an opening! Muztagh, come!”

And Muztagh did come—trumpeting—crashing like an avalanche, with Langur Dass hard after him, afraid, now that he had done the trick. And hot on the trail of Langur Dass ran Ahmad Din, with his knife drawn, not meaning to let that prize be lost to him at less than the cost of the trickster’s life.

But it was not written that the knife should ever enter the flesh of Langur Dass.

The elephant never forgets, and Muztagh was mon-

arch of his breed. He turned back two paces, and struck with his trunk. Ahmad Din was knocked aside as the wind whips a straw.

For an instant elephant and man stood front to front. To the left of them the gates of the stockade dropped shut behind the herd. The elephant stood with trunk slightly lifted, for the moment motionless. The long-haired man who had saved him stood lifting upstretched arms.

It was such a scene as one might remember in an old legend, wherein beasts and men were brothers, or such as sometimes might steal, like something remembered from another age, into a man's dreams. Nowhere but in India, where men have a little knowledge of the mystery of the elephant, could it have taken place at all.

For Langur Dass was speaking to my lord the elephant: "Take me with thee, Muztagh! Monarch of the hills! Thou and I are not of the world of men, but of the jungle and the rain, the silence, and the cold touch of rivers. We are brothers, Muztagh. O beloved, wilt thou leave me here to die!"

The elephant slowly turned his head and looked scornfully at the group of beaters bearing down on Langur Dass, murder shining no less from their knives than from their lighted eyes.

"Take me," the old man pleaded; "thy herd is gone."

The elephant seemed to know what he was asking. He had lifted him to his great shoulders many times, in the last days of his captivity. And besides, his old love for Langur Dass had never been forgotten. It all returned, full and strong as ever. For an elephant never can forget.

It was not one of the man-herd that stood pleading before him. It was one of his own jungle people, just as, deep in his heart, he had always known. So with one motion light as air, he swung him gently to his shoulder.

The jungle, vast and mysterious and still, closed its gates behind them.

TURKEY RED

By FRANCES GILCHRIST WOOD

From *Pictorial Review*

THE old mail-sled running between Haney and Le Beau, in the days when Dakota was still a Territory, was nearing the end of its hundred-mile route.

It was a desolate country in those days; geographers still described it as The Great American Desert, and in looks it deserved the title. Never was there anything so lonesome as that endless stretch of snow reaching across the world until it cut into a cold grey sky, excepting the same desert burned to a brown tinder by the hot wind of summer.

Nothing but sky and plain and its voice, the wind, unless you might count a lonely sod shack blocked against the horizon, miles away from a neighbour, miles from anywhere, its red-curtained square of window glowing through the early twilight.

There were three men in the sled; Dan, the mail-carrier, crusty, belligerently Western, the self-elected guardian of every one on his route; Hillas, a younger man, hardly more than a boy, living on his pre-emption claim near the upper reaches of the stage line; the third a stranger from that part of the country vaguely defined as "the East." He was travelling, had given him name as Smith, and was as inquisitive about the country as he was reticent about his business there. Dan plainly disapproved of him.

They had driven the last cold miles in silence when the stage-driver turned to his neighbour. "Letter didn't say anything about coming out in the spring to look over the country, did it?"

Hillas shook his head. "It was like all the rest, Dan. Don't want to build a railroad at all until the country's settled."

"God! Can't they see the other side of it? What it means to the folks already here to wait for it?"

The stranger thrust a suddenly interested profile above the handsome collar of his fur coat. He looked out over the waste of snow.

"You say there's no timber here?"

Dan maintained unfriendly silence and Hillas answered: "Nothing but scrub on the banks of the creeks. Years of prairie fires have burned out the trees, we think."

"Any ores—mines?"

The boy shook his head as he slid farther down in his worn buffalo coat of the plains.

"We're too busy rustling for something to eat first. And you can't develop mines without tools."

"Tools?"

"Yes, a railroad first of all."

Dan shifted the lines from one fur-mittened hand to the other, swinging the freed numbed arm in rhythmic beating against his body as he looked along the horizon a bit anxiously. The stranger shivered visibly.

"It's a god-forsaken country. Why don't you get out?"

Hillas, following Dan's glance around the blurred sky line, answered absently, "Usual answer is 'Leave? It's all I can do to stay here.'"

Smith regarded him irritably. "Why should any sane man ever have chosen this frozen wilderness?"

Hillas closed his eyes wearily. "We came in the spring."

"I see!" The edged voice snapped, "Visionaries!"

Hillas's eyes opened again, wide, and then the boy was looking beyond the man with the far-seeing eyes of the plainsman. He spoke under his breath as if he were alone.

"Visionary, pioneer, American. That was the evolution in the beginning. Perhaps that is what we are." Suddenly the endurance in his voice went down before

a wave of bitterness. "The first pioneers had to wait, too. How could they stand it so long!"

The young shoulders drooped as he thrust stiff fingers deep within the shapeless coat pockets. He slowly withdrew his right hand holding a parcel wrapped in brown paper. He tore a three-cornered flap in the cover, looked at the brightly coloured contents, replaced the flap and returned the parcel, his chin a little higher.

Dan watched the northern sky-line restlessly. "It won't be snow. Look like a blizzard to you, Hillas?"

The traveller sat up. "Blizzard?"

"Yes," Dan drawled in willing contribution to his uneasiness, "the real Dakota article where blizzards are made. None of your eastern imitations, but a ninety-mile wind that whets slivers of ice off the frozen drifts all the way down from the North Pole. Only one good thing about a blizzard—it's over in a hurry. You get to shelter or you freeze to death."

A gust of wind flung a powder of snow stingingly against their faces. The traveller withdrew his head turtlewise within the handsome collar in final condemnation. "No man in his senses would ever have deliberately come here to live."

Dan turned. "Wouldn't, eh?"

"No."

"You're American?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I was born here. It's my country."

"Ever read about your Pilgrim Fathers?"

"Why, of course."

"Frontiersmen, same as us. You're living on what they did. We're getting this frontier ready for those who come after. Want our children to have a better chance than we had. Our reason's same as theirs. Hillas told you the truth. Country's all right if we had a railroad."

"Humph!" With a contemptuous look across the desert. "Where's your freight, your grain, cattle——"

"West-bound freight, coal, feed, seed-grain, work, and more neighbours."

"One-sided bargain. Road that hauls empties one way doesn't pay. No company would risk a line through here."

The angles of Dan's jaw showed white. "Maybe. Ever get a chance to pay your debt to those Pilgrim pioneers? Ever take it? Think the stock was worth saving?"

He lifted his whip-handle toward a pin-point of light across the stretch of snow. "Donovan lives over there and Mis' Donovan. We call them 'old folks' now; their hair has turned white as these drifts in two years. All they've got is here. He's a real farmer and a lot of help to the country, but they won't last long like this."

Dan swung his arm toward a glimmer nor' by nor'east. "Mis' Clark lives there, a mile back from the stage road. Clark's down in Yankton earning money to keep them going. She's alone with her baby holding down the claim." Dan's arm sagged. "We've had women go crazy out here."

The whip-stock followed the empty horizon half round the compass to a lighted red square not more than two miles away. "Mis' Carson died in the spring. Carson stayed until he was too poor to get away. There's three children—oldest's Katy, just eleven." Dan's words failed, but his eyes told. "Somebody will brag of them as ancestors some day. They'll deserve it if they live through this."

Dan's jaw squared as he leveled his whip-handle straight at the traveller. "I've answered your questions, now you answer mine! We know your opinion of the country—you're not travelling for pleasure or your health. What are you here for?"

"Business. My own!"

"There's two kinds of business out here this time of year. 'Tain't healthy for either of them." Dan's words were measured and clipped. "You've damned the West and all that's in it good and plenty. Now I say, damn the people anywhere in the whole country that won't pay their debts from pioneer to pioneer; that lets us fight the wilderness barehanded and die fighting; that won't risk——"

A grey film dropped down over the world, a leaden shroud that was not the coming of twilight. Dan jerked about, his whip cracked out over the heads of the leaders and they broke into a quick trot. The shriek of the runners along the frozen snow cut through the ominous darkness.

"Hillas," Dan's voice came sharply, "stand up and look for the light on Clark's guide-pole about a mile to the right. God help us if it ain't burning."

Hillas struggled up, one clumsy mitten thatching his eyes from the blinding needles. "I don't see it, Dan. We can't be more than a mile away. Hadn't you better break toward it?"

"Got to keep the track 'til we—see—light!"

The wind tore the words from his mouth as it struck them in lashing fury. The leaders had disappeared in a wall of snow, but Dan's lash whistled forward in reminding authority. There was a moment's lull.

"See it, Hillas?"

"No, Dan."

Tiger-like the storm leaped again, bandying them about in its paws like captive mice. The horses swerved before the punishing blows, bunched, backed, tangled. Dan stood up shouting his orders of menacing appeal above the storm.

Again a breathing space before the next deadly impact. As it came Hillas shouted, "I see it—there, Dan! It's a red light. She's in trouble."

Through the whirling smother and chaos of Dan's cries and the struggling horses the sled lunged out of the road into unbroken drifts. Again the leaders swung sidewise before the lashing of a thousand lariats of ice and bunched against the wheel-horses. Dan swore, prayed, mastered them with far-reaching lash, then the off leader went down. Dan felt behind him for Hillas and shoved the reins against his arm.

"I'll get him up—or cut leaders—loose! If I don't—come back—drive to light. *Don't—get—out!*"

Dan disappeared in the white fury. There were sounds of a struggle; the sled jerked sharply and stood still. Slowly it strained forward.

Hillas was standing, one foot outside on the runner, as they travelled a team's length ahead. He gave a cry—"Dan! Dan!" and gripped a furry bulk that lumbered up out of the drift.

"All—right—son." Dan reached for the reins.

Frantically they fought their slow way toward the blurred light, staggering on in a fight with the odds too savage to last. They stopped abruptly as the winded leaders leaned against a wall interposed between themselves and insatiable fury.

Dan stepped over the dashboard, groped his way along the tongue between the wheel-horses and reached the leeway of a shadowy square. "It's the shed, Hillas. Help get the team in." The exhausted animals crowded into the narrow space without protest.

"Find the guide-rope to the house, Dan?"

"On the other side, toward the shack. Where's—Smith?"

"Here, by the shed."

Dan turned toward the stranger's voice.

"We're going 'round to the blizzard-line tied from shed to shack. Take hold of it and don't let go. If you do you'll freeze before we can find you. When the wind comes, turn your back and wait. Go on when it dies down and never let go the rope. Ready? The wind's dropped. Here, Hillas, next to me."

Three blurs hugged the sod walls around to the north-east corner. The forward shadow reached upward to a swaying rope, lifted the hand of the second who guided the third.

"Hang on to my belt, too, Hillas. Ready—Smith? Got the rope?"

They crawled forward, three barely visible figures, six, eight, ten steps. With a shriek the wind tore at them, beat the breath from their bodies, cut them with stinging needle-points and threw them aside. Dan reached back to make sure of Hillas who fumbled through the darkness for the stranger.

Slowly they struggled ahead, the cold growing more intense; two steps, four, and the mounting fury of the blizzard reached its zenith. The blurs swayed like bat-

tered leaves on a vine that the wind tore in two at last and flung the living beings wide. Dan, clinging to the broken rope, rolled over and found Hillas with the frayed end of the line in his hand, reaching about through the black drifts for the stranger. Dan crept closer, his mouth at Hillas's ear, shouting, "Quick! Right behind me if we're to live through it!"

The next moment Hillas let go the rope. Dan reached madly. "Boy, you can't find him—it'll only be two instead of one! Hillas! Hillas!"

The storm screamed louder than the plainsman and began heaping the snow over three obstructions in its path, two that groped slowly and one that lay still. Dan fumbled at his belt, unfastened it, slipped the rope through the buckle, knotted it and crept its full length back toward the boy. A snow-covered something moved forward guiding another, one arm groping in blind search, reached and touched the man clinging to the belt.

Beaten and buffeted by the ceaseless fury that no longer gave quarter, they slowly fought their way hand-over-hand along the rope, Dan now crawling last. After a frozen eternity they reached the end of the line fastened man-high against a second haven of wall. Hillas pushed open the unlocked door, the three men staggered in and fell panting against the side of the room.

The stage-driver recovered first, pulled off his mittens, examined his fingers and felt quickly of nose, ears, and chin. He looked sharply at Hillas and nodded. Unceremoniously they stripped off the stranger's gloves, reached for a pan, opened the door, dipped it into the drift and plunged Smith's fingers down in the snow.

"Your nose is white, too. Thaw it out."

Abruptly Dan indicated a bench against the wall where the two men seated would take up less space.

"I'm——" The stranger's voice was unsteady. "I——," but Dan had turned his back and his attention to the homesteader.

The eight by ten room constituted the entire home. A shed roof slanted from eight feet high on the door and window side to a bit more than five on the other.

A bed in one corner took up most of the space, and the remaining necessities were bestowed with the compactness of a ship's cabin. The rough boards of the roof and walls had been hidden by a covering of newspapers, with a row of illustrations pasted picture height. Cushions and curtains of turkey-red calico brightened the homely shack.

The driver had slipped off his buffalo coat and was bending over a baby exhaustedly fighting for breath that whistled shrilly through a closing throat. The mother, scarcely more than a girl, held her in tensely extended arms.

"How long's she been this way?"

"She began to choke up day before yesterday, just after you passed on the down trip."

The driver laid big finger tips on the restless wrist.

"She always has the croup when she cuts a tooth, Dan, but this is different. I've used all the medicines I have—nothing relieves the choking."

The girl lifted heavy eyelids above blue semicircles of fatigue and the compelling terror back of her eyes forced a question through dry lips.

"Dan, do you know what membranous croup is like? Is this it?"

The stage-driver picked up the lamp and held it close to the child's face, bringing out with distressing clearness the blue-veined pallour, sunken eyes, and effort of impeded breathing. He frowned, putting the lamp back quickly.

"Mebbe it is, Mis' Clark, but don't you be scared. We'll help you a spell."

Dan lifted the red curtain from the cupboard, found an emptied lard-pail, half filled it with water and placed it on an oil-stove that stood in the center of the room. He looked questioningly about the four walls, discovered a cleverly contrived tool-box beneath the cupboard shelves, sorted out a pair of pincers and bits of iron, laying the latter in a row over the oil blaze. He took down a can of condensed milk, poured a spoonful of the thick stuff into a cup of water and made room for it near the bits of heating iron.

He turned to the girl, opened his lips as if to speak and stood with a face full of pity.

Along the four-foot space between the end of the bed and the opposite wall the girl walked, crooning to the sick child she carried. As they watched, the low song died away, her shoulder rubbed heavily against the boarding, her eyelids dropped and she stood sound asleep. The next hard-drawn breath of the baby roused her and she stumbled on, crooning a lullaby.

Smith clutched the younger man's shoulder. "God, Hillas, look where she's marked the wall rubbing against it! Do you suppose she's been walking that way for three days and nights? Why, she's only a child—no older than my own daughter!"

Hillas nodded.

"Where are her people? Where's her husband?"

"Down in Yankton, Dan told you, working for the winter. Got to have the money to live."

"Where's the doctor?"

"Nearest one's in Haney—four days' trip away by stage."

The traveller stared, frowningly.

Dan was looking about the room again and after prodding the gay seat in the corner, lifted the cover and picked up a folded blanket, shaking out the erstwhile padded cushion. He hung the blanket over the back of a chair.

"Mis' Clark, there's nothing but steam will touch membreenous croup. We saved my baby that way last year. Set here and I'll fix things."

He put the steaming lard-pail on the floor beside the mother and lifted the blanket over the baby's head. She put up her hand.

"She's so little, Dan, and weak. How am I going to know if she—if she——"

Dan rearranged the blanket tent. "Jes! get under with her yourself, Mis' Clark, then you'll know all that's happening."

With the pincers he picked up a bit of hot iron and dropped it hissing into the pail, which he pushed beneath the tent. The room was oppressively quiet, walled in

by the thick sod from the storm. The blanket muffled the sound of the child's breathing and the girl no longer stumbled against the wall.

Dan lifted the corner of the blanket and another bit of iron hissed as it struck the water. The older man leaned toward the younger.

"Stove—fire?" with a gesture of protest against the inadequate oil blaze.

Hillas whispered, "Can't afford it. Coal is \$9.00 in Haney, \$18.00 here."

They sat with heads thrust forward, listening in the intolerable silence. Dan lifted the blanket, hearkened a moment, then—"pst!" another bit of iron fell into the pail. Dan stooped to the tool-chest for a reserve supply when a strangling cough made him spring to his feet and hurriedly lift the blanket.

The child was beating the air with tiny fists, fighting for breath. The mother stood rigid, arms out.

"Turn her this way!" Dan shifted the struggling child, face out. "Now watch out for the——"

The strangling cough broke and a horrible something—"It's the membrane! She's too weak—let me have her!"

Dan snatched the child and turned it face downward. The blue-faced baby fought in a supreme effort—again the horrible something—then Dan laid the child, white and motionless, in her mother's arms. She held the limp body close, her eyes wide with fear.

"Dan, is—is she——?"

A faint sobbing breath of relief fluttered the pale lips that moved in the merest ghost of a smile. The heavy eyelids half-lifted and the child nestled against its mother's breast. The girl swayed, shaking with sobs, "Baby—baby!"

She struggled for self-control and stood up straight and pale. "Dan, I ought to tell you. When it began to get dark with the storm and time to put up the lantern, I was afraid to leave the baby. If she strangled when I was gone—with no one to help her—she would die!"

Her lips quivered as she drew the child closer. "I

didn't go right away but—I did—at last. I propped her up in bed and ran. If I hadn't——” Her eyes were wide with the shadowy edge of horror, “if I hadn't—you'd have been lost in the blizzard and—my baby would have died!”

She stood before the men as if for judgment, her face wet with unchecked tears. Dan patted her shoulder dumbly and touched a fresh, livid bruise that ran from the curling hair on her temple down across cheek and chin.

“Did you get this then?”

She nodded. “The storm threw me against the pole when I hoisted the lantern. I thought I'd—never—get back!”

It was Smith who translated Dan's look of appeal for the cup of warm milk and held it to the girl's lips.

“Drink it, Mis' Clark, you need it.”

She made heroic attempts to swallow, her head drooped lower over the cup and fell against the driver's rough sleeve. “Poor kid, dead asleep!”

Dan guided her stumbling feet toward the bed that the traveller sprang to open. She guarded the baby in the protecting angle of her arm into safety upon the pillow, then fell like a log beside her. Dan slipped off the felt boots, lifted her feet to the bed and softly drew covers over mother and child.

“Poor kid, but she's grit, clear through!”

Dan walked to the window, looked out at the lessening storm, then at the tiny alarm-clock on the cupboard. “Be over pretty soon now!” He seated himself by the table, dropped his head wearily forward on folded arms and was asleep.

The traveller's face had lost some of its shrewdness. It was as if the white frontier had seized and shaken him into a new conception of life. He moved restlessly along the bench, then stepped softly to the side of the bed and straightened the coverlet into greater nicety while his lips twitched.

With consuming care he folded the blanket and restored the corner seat to its accustomed appearance of luxury. He looked about the room, picked up the grey

kitten sleeping contentedly on the floor and settled it on the red cushion with anxious attention to comfort.

He examined with curiosity the few books carefully covered on a corner shelf, took down an old hand-tooled volume and lifted his eyebrows at the ancient coat of arms on the book plate. He tiptoed across to the bench and pointed to the script beneath the plate. "Edward Winslow (7) to his dear daughter, Alice (8)."

He motioned toward the bed. "Her name?"

Hillas nodded, Smith grinned. "Dan's right. Blood will tell, even to damning the rest of us."

He sat down on the bench. "I understand more than I did, Hillas, since—you crawled back after me—out there. But how can you stand it here? I know you and the Clarks are people of education and, oh, all the rest; you could make your way anywhere."

Hillas spoke slowly. "I think you have to live here to know. It means something to be a pioneer. You can't be one if you've got it in you to be a quitter. The country will be all right some day." He reached for his greatcoat, bringing out a brown-paper parcel. He smiled at it oddly and went on as if talking to himself.

"When the drought and the hot winds come in the summer and burn the buffalo grass to a tinder and the monotony of the plains weighs on you as it does now, there's a common, low-growing cactus scattered over the prairie that blooms into the gayest red flower you ever saw.

"It wouldn't count for much anywhere else, but the pluck of it, without rain for months, dew even. It's the 'colours of courage.'"

He turned the torn parcel, showing the bright red within, and looked at the cupboard and window with shining, tired eyes.

"Up and down the frontier in these shacks, homes, you'll find things made of turkey-red calico, cheap, common elsewhere——" He fingered the three-cornered flap. "It's our 'colours.'" He put the parcel back in his pocket. "I bought two yards yesterday after—I got a letter at Haney."

Smith sat looking at the gay curtains before him.

The fury of the storm was dying down into fitful gusts. Dan stirred, looked quickly toward the bed, then the window, and got up quietly.

"I'll hitch up. We'll stop at Peterson's and tell her to come over." He closed the door noiselessly.

The traveller was frowning intently. Finally he turned toward the boy who sat with his head leaning back against the wall, eyes closed.

"Hillas," his very tones were awkward, "they call me a shrewd business man. I am, it's a selfish job and I'm not reforming now. But twice to-night you—children have risked your lives, without thought, for a stranger. I've been thinking about that railroad. Haven't you raised any grain or cattle that could be used for freight?"

The low answer was toneless. "Drought killed the crops, prairie fires burned the hay, of course the cattle starved."

"There's no timber, ore, nothing that could be used for east-bound shipment?"

The plainsman looked searchingly into the face of the older man. "There's no timber this side the Missouri. Across the river it's reservation—Sioux. We——" He frowned and stopped.

Smith stood up, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. "I admitted I was shrewd, Hillas, but I'm not yellow clear through, not enough to betray this part of the frontier anyhow. I had a man along here last fall spying for minerals. That's why I'm out here now. If you know the location, and we both think you do, I'll put capital in your way to develop the mines and use what pull I have to get the road in."

He looked down at the boy and thrust out a masterful jaw. There was a ring of sincerity no one could mistake when he spoke again.

"This country's a desert now, but I'd back the Sahara peopled with your kind. This is on the square, Hillas, don't tell me you won't believe I'm—American enough to trust?"

The boy tried to speak. With stiffened body and clenched hands he struggled for self-control. Finally

in a ragged whisper, "If I try to tell you what—it means—I can't talk! Dan and I know of outcropping coal over in the Buttes." He nodded in the direction of the Missouri, "but we haven't had enough money to file mining claims."

"Know where to dig for samples under this snow?"

The boy nodded. "Some in my shack too. I——" His head went down upon the crossed arms. Smith laid an awkward hand on the heaving shoulders, then rose and crossed the room to where the girl had stumbled in her vigil. Gently he touched the darkened streak where her shoulders had rubbed and blurred the newspaper print. He looked from the relentless white desert outside to the gay bravery within and bent his head. "Turkey-red—calico!"

There was the sound of jingling harness and the crunch of runners. The men bundled into fur coats.

"Hillas, the draw right by the house here," Smith stopped and looked sharply at the plainsman, then went on with firm carelessness, "This draw ought to strike a low grade that would come out near the river level. Does Dan know Clark's address?" Hillas nodded.

They tiptoed out and closed the door behind them softly. The wind had swept every cloud from the sky and the light of the northern stars etched a dazzling world. Dan was checking up the leaders as Hillas caught him by the shoulder and shook him like a clumsy bear.

"Dan, you blind old mole, can you see the headlight of the Overland Freight blazing and thundering down that draw over the Great Missouri and Eastern?"

Dan stared.

"I knew you couldn't!" Hillas thumped him with furry fist. "Dan," the wind might easily have drowned the unsteady voice, "I've told Mr. Smith about the coal—for freight. He's going to help us get capital for mining and after that the road."

"Smith! Smith! Well, I'll be—aren't you a claim spotter?"

He turned abruptly and crunched toward the stage. His passengers followed. Dan paused with his foot

on the runner and looked steadily at the traveller from under lowered, shaggy brows.

"You're going to get a road out here?"

"I've told Hillas I'll put money in your way to mine the coal. Then the railroad will come."

Dan's voice rasped with tension. "We'll get out the coal. Are you going to see that the road is built?"

Unconsciously the traveller held up his right hand. "I am!"

Dan searched his face sharply. Smith nodded. "I'm making my bet on the people—friend!"

It was a new Dan who lifted his bronzed face to a white world. His voice was low and very gentle. "To bring a road here," he swung his whip-handle from Donovan's light around to Carson's square, sweeping in all that lay behind, "out here to them——" The pioneer faced the wide desert that reached into a misty space ablaze with stars, "would be like—playing God!"

The whip thudded softly into the socket and Dan rolled up on the driver's seat. Two men climbed in behind him. The long lash swung out over the leaders as Dan headed the old mail-sled across the drifted right-of-way of the Great Missouri and Eastern.

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD

By MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

From Saturday Evening Post

I WAS before one of those difficult positions unavoidable to a man of letters. My visitor must have some answer. He had come back for the manuscript of his memoir and for my opinion. It was the twilight of an early Washington winter. The lights in the great library, softened with delicate shades, had been turned on. Outside, Sheridan Circle was almost a thing of beauty in its vague outline; even the squat ridiculous bronze horse had a certain dignity in the blue shadow.

If one had been speculating on the man, from his physical aspect one would have taken Walker for an engineer of some sort, rather than the head of the United States Secret Service. His lean face and his angular manner gave that impression. Even now, motionless in the big chair beyond the table, he seemed—how shall I say it?—mechanical.

And that was the very defect in his memoir. He had cut the great cases into a dry recital. There was no longer in them any pressure of a human impulse. The glow of inspired detail had been dissected out. Everything startling and wonderful had been devitalized.

The memoir was a report.

The bulky typewritten manuscript lay on the table beside the electric lamp, and I stood about uncertain how to tell him.

"Walker," I said, "did nothing wonderful ever happen to you in the adventure of these cases?"

"What precisely do you mean?" he replied.

The practical nature of the man tempted me to extravagance.

"Well," I said, "for example, were you never kissed

in a lonely street by a mysterious woman and the flash of your dark lantern reveal a face of startling beauty?"

"No," he said, as though he were answering a sensible question, "that never happened to me."

"Then," I continued, "perhaps you have found a prince of the church, pale as alabaster, sitting in his red robe, who put together the indicatory evidence of the crime that baffled you with such uncanny acumen that you stood aghast at his perspicacity?"

"No," he said; and then his face lighted. "But I'll tell you what I did find. I found a drunken hobo at Atlantic City who was the best detective I ever saw."

I sat down and tapped the manuscript with my fingers.

"It's not here," I said. "Why did you leave it out?"

He took a big gold watch out of his pocket and turned it about in his hand. The case was covered with an inscription.

"Well," he said, "the boys in the department think a good deal of me. I shouldn't like them to know how a dirty tramp faked me at Atlantic City. I don't mind telling you, but I couldn't print it in a memoir."

He went directly ahead with the story and I was careful not to interrupt him:

"I was sitting in a rolling chair out there on the Boardwalk before the Traymore. I was nearly all in, and I had taken a run to Atlantic for a day or two of the sea air. The fact is the whole department was down and out. You may remember what we were up against; it finally got into the newspapers.

"The government plates of the Third Liberty Bond issue had disappeared. We knew how they had gotten out, and we thought we knew the man at the head of the thing. It was a Mulehaus job, as we figured it.

"It was too big a thing for a little crook. With the government plates they could print Liberty Bonds just as the Treasury would. And they could sow the world with them."

He paused and moved his gold-rimmed spectacles a little closer in on his nose.

"You see these war bonds are scattered all over the country. They are held by everybody. It's not what

it used to be, a banker's business that we could round up. Nobody could round up the holders of these bonds.

"A big crook like Mulehaus could slip a hundred million of them into the country and never raise a ripple."

He paused and drew his fingers across his bony protruding chin.

"I'll say this for Mulehaus: He's the hardest man to identify in the whole kingdom of crooks. Scotland Yard, the Service de la Sûreté, everybody, says that. I don't mean dime-novel disguises—false whiskers and a limp. I mean the ability to be the character he pretends—the thing that used to make Joe Jefferson Rip Van Winkle—and not an actor made up to look like it. That's the reason nobody could keep track of Mulehaus, especially in South American cities. He was a French banker in the Egypt business and a Swiss banker in the Argentine."

He turned back from the digression:

"And it was a clean job. They had got away with the plates. We didn't have a clue. We thought, naturally, that they'd make for Mexico or some South American country to start their printing press. And we had the ports and the border netted up. Nothing could have gone out across the border or through any port. All the customs officers were working with us, and every agent of the Department of Justice."

He looked at me steadily across the table.

"You see the government had to get those plates back before the crook started to print, or else take up every bond of that issue over the whole country. It was a hell of a thing!

"Of course we had gone right after the record of all the big crooks to see whose line this sort of job was. And the thing narrowed down to Mulehaus or old Vronsky. We soon found out it wasn't Vronsky. He was in Joliet. It was Mulehaus. But we couldn't find him.

"We didn't even know that Mulehaus was in America. He's a big crook with a genius for selecting men. He might be directing the job from Rio or a Mexican port. But we were sure it was a Mulehaus job. He sold the

French securities in Egypt in '90; and he's the man who put the bogus Argentine bonds on our market—you'll find the case in the 115th Federal Reporter.

"Well," he went on, "I was sitting out there in the rolling chair, looking at the sun on the sea and thinking about the thing, when I noticed this hobo that I've been talking about. He was my chair attendant, but I hadn't looked at him before. He had moved round from behind me and was now leaning against the galvanized-pipe railing.

"He was a big human creature, a little stooped, unshaved and dirty; his mouth was slack and loose, and he had a big mobile nose that seemed to move about like a piece of soft rubber. He had hardly any clothing; a cap that must have been fished out of an ash barrel, no shirt whatever, merely an old ragged coat buttoned round him, a pair of canvas breeches and carpet slippers tied on to his feet with burlap, and wrapped round his ankles to conceal the fact that he wore no socks.

"As I looked at him he darted out, picked up the stump of a cigarette that someone had thrown down, and came back to the railing to smoke it, his loose mouth and his big soft nose moving like kneaded putty.

"Altogether this tramp was the worst human derelict I ever saw. And it occurred to me that this was the one place in the whole of America where any sort of a creature could get a kind of employment and no questions asked.

"Anything that could move and push a chair could get fifteen cents an hour from McDuyal. Wise man, poor man, beggar man, thief, it was all one to McDuyal. And the creatures could sleep in the shed behind the rolling chairs.

"I suppose an impulse to offer the man a garment of some sort moved me to address him. 'You're nearly naked,' I said.

"He crossed one leg over the other with the toe of the carpet slipper touching the walk, in the manner of a burlesque actor, took the cigarette out of his mouth with a little flourish, and replied to me: 'Sure, Governor, I ain't dolled up like John Drew.'

"There was a sort of cocky unconcern about the creature that gave his miserable state a kind of beggarly distinction. He was in among the very dregs of life, and he was not depressed about it.

"'But if I had a sawbuck,' he continued, 'I could bulge your eye. . . . Couldn't point the way to one?'

"He arrested my answer with the little flourish of his fingers holding the stump of the cigarette.

"'Not work, Governor,' and he made a little duck of his head, 'and not murder. . . . Go as far as you please between 'em.'

"The fantastic manner of the derelict was infectious.

"'O. K.,' I said. 'Go out and find me a man who is a deserter from the German Army, was a tanner in Bâle and began life as a sailor, and I'll double your money—I'll give you a twenty-dollar bill.'

"The creature whistled softly in two short staccato notes.

"'Some little order,' he said. And taking a toothpick out of his pocket he stuck it into the stump of the cigarette which had become too short to hold between his fingers.

"At this moment a boy from the postoffice came to me with the daily report from Washington, and I got out of the chair, tipped the creature, and went into the hotel, stopping to pay McDuyal as I passed.

"There was nothing new from the department except that our organization over the country was in close touch. We had offered five thousand dollars reward for the recovery of the plates, and the Postoffice Department was now posting the notice all over America in every office. The Secretary thought we had better let the public in on it and not keep it an underground offer to the service.

"I had forgotten the hobo, when about five o'clock he passed me a little below the Steel Pier. He was in a big stride and he had something clutched in his hand.

"He called to me as he hurried along: 'I got him, Governor. . . . See you later!'

"'See me now,' I said. 'What's the hurry?'

"He flashed his hand open, holding a silver dollar with his thumb against the palm.

"Can't stop now, I'm going to get drunk. See you later."

"I smiled at the disingenuous creature. He was saving me for the dry hour. He could point out Mulehaus in any passing chair, and I would give some coin to be rid of his pretension."

Walker paused. Then he went on:

"I was right. The hobo was waiting for me when I came out of the hotel the following morning.

"Howdy, Governor," he said; "I located your man."

"I was interested to see how he would frame up his case.

"How did you find him?" I said.

"He grinned, moving his lip and his loose nose.

"Some luck, Governor, and some sleuthin'. It was like this: I thought you was stringin' me. But I said to myself I'll keep out an eye; maybe it's on the level—any damn thing can happen."

"He put up his hand as though to hook his thumb into the armhole of his vest, remembered that he had only a coat buttoned round him and dropped it.

"And believe me or not, Governor, it's the God's truth. About four o'clock up toward the Inlet I passed a big, well-dressed, banker-looking gent walking stiff from the hip and throwing out his leg. "Come eleven!" I said to myself. "It's the goose-step!" I had an empty roller, and I took a turn over to him.

"Chair, Admiral?" I said.

"He looked at me sort of queer.

"What makes you think I'm an admiral, my man?" he answers.

"Well," I says, lounging over on one foot reflective like, "nobody could be a-viewin' the sea with that lovin', ownership look unless he'd bossed her a bit. . . . If I'm right, Admiral, you takes the chair."

"He laughed, but he got in. "I'm not an admiral," he said, "but it is true that I've followed the sea."

"The hobo paused, and put up his first and second fingers spread like a V.

"Two points, Governor—the gent had been a sailor and a soldier; now how about the tanner business?"

"He scratched his head, moving the ridiculous cap.

"That sort of puzzled me, and I pussyfooted along toward the Inlet thinkin' about it. If a man was a tanner, and especially a foreign, hand-workin' tanner, what would his markin's be?

"I tried to remember everybody that I'd ever seen handlin' a hide, and all at once I recollected that the first thing a dago shoemaker done when he picked up a piece of leather was to smooth it out with his thumbs. An' I said to myself, now that'll be what a tanner does, only he does it more . . . he's always doin' it. Then I asks myself what would be the markin's?"

"The hobo paused, his mouth open, his head twisted to one side. Then he jerked up as under a released spring.

"And right away, Governor, I got the answer to it—flat thumbs!"

"The hobo stepped back with an air of victory and flashed his hand up.

"And he had 'em! I asked him what time it was so I could keep the hour straight for McDuyal, I told him, but the real reason was so I could see his hands."

Walker crossed one leg over the other.

"It was clever," he said, "and I hesitated to shatter it. But the question had to come.

"Where is your man?" I said.

"The hobo executed a little deprecatory step, with his fingers picking at his coat pockets.

"That's the trouble, Governor," he answered; "I intended to sleuth him for you, but he give me a dollar and I got drunk . . . you saw me. That man had got out at McDuyal's place not five minutes before. I was flashin' to the booze can when you tried to stop me. . . . Nothin' doin' when I get the price."

Walker paused.

"It was a good fairy story and worth something. I offered him half a dollar. Then I got a surprise.

"The creature looked eagerly at the coin in my fingers, and he moved toward it. He was crazy for the liquor it would buy. But he set his teeth and pulled up.

" 'No, Governor,' he said, 'I'm in it for the sawbuck. Where'll I find you about noon?'

"I promised to be on the Boardwalk before Heinz's Pier at two o'clock, and he turned to shuffle away. I called an inquiry after him. . . . You see there were two things in his story: How did he get a dollar tip, and how did he happen to make his imaginary man banker-looking? Mulehaus had been banker-looking in both the Egypt and the Argentine affairs. I left the latter point suspended, as we say. But I asked about the dollar. He came back at once.

" 'I forgot about that, Governor,' he said. 'It was like this: The admiral kept looking out at the sea where an old freighter was going South. You know, the fruit line to New York. One of them goes by every day or two. And I kept pushing him along. Finally we got up to the Inlet, and I was about to turn when he stopped me. You know the neck of ground out beyond where the street cars loop; there's an old board fence by the road, then sand to the sea, and about halfway between the fence and the water there's a shed with some junk in it. You've seen it. They made the old America out there and the shed was a tool house.

" 'When I stopped the admiral says: "Cut across to the hole in that old board fence and see if an automobile has been there, and I'll give you a dollar." An' I done it, an' I got it.'

"Then he shuffled off.

" 'Be on the spot, Governor, an' I'll lead him to you.' "

Walker leaned over, rested his elbows on the arms of his chair, and linked his fingers together.

"That gave me a new flash on the creature. He was a slicker article than I imagined. I was not to get off with a tip. He was taking some pains to touch me for a greenback. I thought I saw his line. It would not account for his hitting the description of Mulehaus in the make-up of his straw man, but it would furnish the data for the dollar story. I had drawn the latter a little before he was ready. It belonged in what he planned to give me at two o'clock. But I thought I saw what the creature was about. And I was right."

Walker put out his hand and moved the pages of his memoir on the table. Then he went on:

"I was smoking a cigar on a bench at the entrance to Heinz's Pier when the hobo shuffled up. He came down one of the streets from Pacific Avenue, and the direction confirmed me in my theory. It also confirmed me in the opinion that I was all kinds of a fool to let this dirty hobo get a further chance at me.

"I was not in a very good humour. Everything I had set going after Mulehaus was marking time. The only report was progress in linking things up; not only along the Canadian and Mexican borders and the custom houses, but we had also done a further unusual thing. we had an agent on every ship going out of America to follow through to the foreign port and look out for anything picked up on the way.

"It was a plan I had set at immediately the robbery was discovered. It would cut out the trick of reshipping at sea from some fishing craft or small boat. The reports were encouraging enough in that respect. We had the whole country as tight as a drum. But it was slender comfort when the Treasury was raising the devil for the plates and we hadn't a clue to them."

Walker stopped a moment. Then he went on:

"I felt like kicking the hobo when he got to me, he was so obviously the extreme of all worthless creatures, with that apologetic, confidential manner which seems to be an abominable attendant on human degeneracy. One may put up with it for a little while, but it presently becomes intolerable.

"'Governor,' he began, when he shuffled up, 'you won't get mad if I say a little somethin'?'

"'Go on and say it,' I said.

"The expression on his dirty unshaved face became, if possible, more foolish.

"'Well, then, Governor, askin' your pardon, you ain't Mr. Henry P. Johnson, from Erie; you're the Chief of the United States Secret Service, from Washington.'"

Walker moved in his chair.

"That made me ugly," he went on, "the assurance of the creature and my unspeakable carelessness in per-

mitting the official letters brought to me on the day before by the postoffice messenger to be seen. In my relaxation I had forgotten the eye of the chair attendant. I took the cigar out of my teeth and looked at him.

"‘And I’ll say a little something myself!’ I could hardly keep my foot clear of him. ‘When you got sober this morning and remembered who I was, you took a turn up round the postoffice to make sure of it, and while you were in there you saw the notice of the reward for the stolen bond plates. That gave you the notion with which you pieced out your fairy story about how you got the dollar tip. Having discovered my identity through a piece of damned carelessness on my part, and having seen the postal notice of the reward, you undertook to enlarge your little game. That’s the reason you wouldn’t take fifty cents. It was your notion in the beginning to make a touch for a tip. And it would have worked. But now you can’t get a damned cent out of me.’ Then I threw a little brush into him: ‘I’d have stood a touch for your finding the fake tanner, because there isn’t any such person.’"

"I intended to put the hobo out of business," Walker went on, "but the effect of my words on him were even more startling than I anticipated. His jaw dropped and he looked at me in astonishment.

"‘No such person!’ he repeated. ‘Why, Governor, before God, I found a man like that, an’ he was a banker—one of the big ones, sure as there’s a hell!’"

Walker put out his hands in a puzzled gesture.

"There it was again, the description of Mulehaus! And it puzzled me up. Every motion of this hobo’s mind in every direction about this affair was perfectly clear to me. I saw his intention in every turn of it and just where he got the material for the details of his story. But this absolutely distinguishing description of Mulehaus was beyond me. Everybody, of course, knew that we were looking for the lost plates, for there was the reward offered by the Treasury; but no human soul outside of the trusted agents of the department knew that we were looking for Mulehaus."

Walker did not move, but he stopped in his recital for a moment.

"The tramp shuffled up a step closer to the bench where I sat. The anxiety in his big slack face was sincere beyond question.

" 'I can't find the banker man, Governor; he's skipped the coop. But I believe I can find what he's hid.'

" 'Well,' I said, 'go on and find it.'

"The hobo jerked out his limp hands in a sort of hopeless gesture.

" 'Now, Governor,' he whimpered, 'what good would it do me to find them plates?'

" 'You'd get five thousand dollars,' I said.

" 'I'd git kicked into the discard by the first cop that got to me,' he answered, 'that's what I'd git.'

"The creature's dirty, unshaved jowls began to shake, and his voice became wholly a whimper.

" 'I've got a line on this thing, Governor, sure as there's a hell. That banker man was viewin' the layout. I've thought it all over, an' this is the way it would be. They're afraid of the border an' they're afraid of the custom houses, so they runs the loot down here in an automobile, hides it up about the Inlet, and plans to go out with it to one of them fruit steamers passing on the way to Tampico. They'd have them plates bundled up in a sailor's chest most like.

" 'Now, Governor, you'd say why ain't they already done it; an' I'd answer, the main guy—this banker man—didn't know the automobile had got here until he sent me to look, and there ain't been no ship along since then. . . . I've been special careful to find that out.' And then the creature began to whine. 'Have a heart, Governor, come along with me. Gimme a show!'

"It was not the creature's plea that moved me, nor his pretended deductions; I'm a bit old to be soft. It was the 'banker man' sticking like a bur in the hobo's talk. I wanted to keep him in right until I understood where he got it. No doubt that seems a slight reason for going out to the Inlet with the creature; but you must remember that slight things are often big sign-boards in our business."

He continued, his voice precise and even:

"We went directly from the end of the Boardwalk to the old shed; it was open, an unfastened door on a pair of leather hinges. The shed is small, about twenty feet by eleven, with a hard dirt floor packed down by the workmen who had used it, a combination of clay and sand like the Jersey roads put in to make a floor. All round it, from the sea to the board fence, was soft sand. There were some pieces of old junk lying about in the shed; but nothing of value or it would have been nailed up.

"The hobo led right off with his deductions. There was the track of a man, clearly outlined in the soft sand, leading from the board fence to the shed and returning, and no other track anywhere about.

"‘Now, Governor,’ he began, when he had taken a look at the tracks, ‘the man that made them tracks carried something into this shed, and he left it here, and it was something heavy.’

"I was fairly certain that the hobo had salted the place for me, made the tracks himself; but I played out a line to him.

"‘How do you know that?’ I said.

"‘Well, Governor,’ he answered, ‘take a look at them two line of tracks. In the one comin’ to the shed the man was walkin’ with his feet apart and in the one goin’ back he was walkin’ with his feet in front of one another; that’s because he was carryin’ somethin’ heavy when he come an’ nothin’ when he left.’

"It was an observation on footprints," he went on, "that had never occurred to me. The hobo saw my awakened interest, and he added:

"‘Did you never notice a man carryin’ a heavy load? He kind of totters, walkin’ with his feet apart to keep his balance. That makes his foot tracks side by side like, instead of one before the other as he makes them when he’s goin’ light.’"

Walker interrupted his narrative with a comment:

"It’s the truth. I’ve verified it a thousand times since that hobo put me onto it. A line running through the center of the heel prints of a man carrying a heavy

burden will be a zigzag, while one through the heel prints of the same man without the burden will be almost straight.

"The tramp went right on with his deductions:

" 'If it come in and didn't go out, it's here.'

"And he began to go over the inside of the shed. He searched it like a man searching a box for a jewel. He moved the pieces of old castings and he literally fingered the shed from end to end. He would have found a bird's egg.

"Finally he stopped and stood with hand spread out over his mouth. And I selected this critical moment to touch the powder off under his game.

" 'Suppose,' I said, 'that this man with the heavy load wished to mislead us; suppose that instead of bringing something here he took one of these old castings away?'

"The hobo looked at me without changing his position.

" 'How could he, Governor; he was pointin' this way with the load?'

" 'By walking backward,' I said. For it had occurred to me that perhaps the creature had manufactured this evidence for the occasion, and I wished to test the theory."

Walker went on in his slow, even voice:

"The test produced more action than I expected. The hobo dived out through the door. I followed to see him disappear. But he was not in flight; he was squatting down over the foot prints. And a moment later he rocked back on his haunches with a little exultant yelp.

" 'Dope's wrong, Governor,' he said; 'he was sure comin' this way.' Then he explained: 'If a man's walkin' forward in sand or mud or snow the toe of his shoe flirts out a little of it, an' if he's walkin' backward his heel flirts it out.'

"At this point I began to have some respect for the creature's ability. He got up and came back into the shed. And there he stood, in his old position, with his fingers over his mouth, looking round at the empty shed.

in which, as I have said, one could not have concealed a bird's egg.

"I watched him without offering any suggestion, for my interest in the thing had awakened and I was curious to see what he would do. He stood perfectly motionless for about a minute; and then suddenly he snapped his fingers and the light came into his face.

" 'I got it, Governor!' Then he came over to where I stood. 'Gimme a quarter to get a bucket.'

"I gave him the coin, for I was now profoundly puzzled, and he went out. He was gone perhaps twenty minutes, and when he came in he had a bucket of water. But he had evidently been thinking on the way, for he set the bucket down carefully, wiped his hands on his canvas breeches, and began to speak, with a little apologetic whimper in his voice.

" 'Now look here, Governor,' he said, 'I'm a-goin' to talk turkey; do I get the five thousand if I find this stuff?'

" 'Surely,' I answered him.

" 'An' there'll be no monkey'n', Governor; you'll take me down to a bank yourself an' put the money in my hand?'

" 'I promise you that,' I assured him.

"But he was not entirely quiet in his mind about it. He shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and his soft rubber nose worked.

" 'Now, Governor,' he said, 'I'm leery about jokers—I gotta be. I don't want any string to this money. If I get it I want to go and blow it in. I don't want you to hand me the roll an' then start any reformin' stunt—a-holdin' of it in trust an' a probation officer a-pussy-footin' me, or any funny business. I want the wad an' a clear road to the bright lights, with no word passed along to pinch me. Do I git it?'

" 'It's a trade!' I said.

" 'O. K.,' he answered, and he took up the bucket. He began at the door and poured the water carefully on the hard tramped earth. When the bucket was empty he brought another and another. Finally about midway of the floor space he stopped.

" 'Here it is!' he said.

"I was following beside him, but I saw nothing to justify his words.

" 'Why do you think the plates are buried here?' I said.

" 'Look at the air bubbles comin' up, Governor,' he answered."

Walker stopped, then he added:

"It's a thing which I did not know until that moment, but it's the truth. If hard-packed earth is dug up and repacked air gets into it, and if one pours water on the place air bubbles will come up."

He did not go on, and I flung the big query of his story at him.

"And you found the plates there?"

"Yes," he replied, "in the false bottom of an old steamer trunk."

"And the hobo got the money?"

"Certainly," he answered. "I put it into his hand, and let him go with it, as I promised."

Again he was silent, and I turned toward him in astonishment.

"Then," I said, "why did you begin this story by saying the hobo faked you? I don't see the fake; he found the plates and he was entitled to the reward."

Walker put his hand into his pocket, took out a leather case, selected a paper from among its contents and handed it to me. "I didn't see the fake either," he said, "until I got this letter."

I unfolded the letter carefully. It was neatly written in a hand like copper plate and dated from Buenos Aires:

Dear Colonel Walker: When I discovered that you were planting an agent on every ship I had to abandon the plates and try for the reward. Thank you for the five thousand; it covered expenses. Very sincerely yours,

D. MULEHAUS.

THE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON

By THOMAS GRANT SPRINGER

From Live Stories

KAN WONG, the sampan boatman, sat in the bow of his tiny craft, looking with dream-misted eyes upon the oily, yellow flood of the Yangtze River. Far across on the opposite shore, blurred by the mist that the alchemy of the setting sun transmuted from miasmic vapour to a veil of gold, rose the purple-shadowed, stone-tumbled ruins of Hang Gow, ruins that had been a proud, walled city in the days before the Tai-ping Rebellion.

Viewing its slowly dimming powers as they sank into the fading gold of the mist that the coming night thickened and darkened as it wiped out the light with a damp hand, Kan Wong dreamed over the stories that his father's father—now revered dust somewhere off toward the hills that dimly met the melting sky line—had told him of that ruined city, wherein he, Kan Wong, had not Fate made men mad, would now be ruling a lordly household, even wearing the peacock feather and embroidered jacket that were his by right of the Dragon's blood, that blood now hidden under the sun-browned skin of a river coolie. Kan Wong stuffed fine-cut into his brass-bowled pipe and struck a spark from his tinder box. Through his wide nostrils twin streamers of smoke writhed out, twisting fantastically together and mixing slowly with the rising river mist. His pipe became a wand of dreams summoning the genii of glorious memory. The blood of the Dragon in his veins quickened from the lethargy to which drudgery had cooled it, and raced hotly as he thought of the battle past of his forefathers.

Off somewhere along the river's winding length, where

it crawled slowly to the sea, lay the great coast cities. The lazy ripples, light-tipped, beckoned with luring fingers. There was naught to stay him. His sampan was his home, and movable, therefore the morrow would see him turning its bow downstream to seek that strange city where, he had heard, dwelt many Foreign Devils who now and then scattered wealth with a prodigal hand.

In that pale hour when the mist, not yet dissipated by the rising sun, lay in a cold, silver veil upon the night-chilled water, he pushed out from the shore and pointed the sampan's prow downstream. Days it took him to reach salt water. He loitered for light cargoes at village edges, or picked up the price of his daily rice at odd tasks ashore, but always, were it day or night for travel, his tiny craft bore surely seaward. Mile after slow mile dropped behind him, like the praying beads of a lama's chain, but at last the river salted slightly, and his tiny craft was lifted by the slow swell of the sea's hand reaching for inland.

The river became more populous. The crowding sampans, houseboats, and junks stretched far out into its oily, oozy flow, making a floating city as he neared the congested life of the coast, where the ever-increasing population failed to find ground space in its maggoty swarming. As the stream widened until the farther bank disappeared in the artificial mist of rising smoke and man-stirred dust, the Foreign Devils' fire junks appeared, majestically steaming up and down—swift swans that scorned the logy, lumbering native craft, the mat sails and toiling sweeps of which made them appear motionless by comparison. A day or two of this and then the coast, with Shanghai sprawling upon the bank, writhing with life, odoriferous, noisy, perpetually awake.

Kang Wong slid into its waterfront turmoil, an infinitesimal human atom added to it. His tiny craft fixed itself upon the outer edge of the wriggling river life like a coral cell attaching itself to a slow growing atoll. From there he worked his way inshore, crawling over the craft that stretched out from the low banks as a water beetle might move over the flotsam and jetsam caught

in the back-water of a sluggish stream. Once in the narrow, crowded streets of the city itself, he roamed aimlessly, open-eyed to its wonders, dreamily observant. Out of the native quarter and into the foreign section he moved, accustoming himself to these masters of mystery whom he was about to serve, calling sluggish memory to his aid as his ears strove to reconstruct the meaning of the barbarous jargon.

Into the quarter where the Foreign Devils and the native population came together to barter and to trade, he strayed one day. A Foreign Devil in a strangely unattractive uniform was addressing a crowd of coolies in their own tongue. Kan Wong attached himself to the outer edge of the impassively curious throng, his ears alert, his features, as ever, an imperturbable mask. The foreign officer, for such he seemed to be, was making an offer to the assemblage for contract labour: one dollar a day, with rice, fish, and tea rations, for work in a foreign land. Kan Wong translated the money quickly into *yens*. The sum seemed incredible to him. What service would he not perform for such payment? Why, within a year, or two at the very most, with careful frugality, he might return and buy himself a junk worthy of his Dragon dreams of the river. And then . . .

The officer talked on, persuading, holding out the glittering lure of profit and adventure. Kan Wong listened eagerly. He had thought there was a ban on contract labour, but perhaps this new Republican Government, so friendly to the Foreign Devil, had removed it. Surely one who wore the uniform of a soldier and an officer could not thus publicly solicit coolies without the sanction of the mandarins, or escape their notice.

Kan Wong studied the crowd. It contained a few Chinese soldiers, who were obviously keeping order. He was satisfied, and edged his way closer to the speaker. There, already, ranged to one side was a line of his own kind, jabbering to a Celestial who put down their names on slips of rice paper and accepted their marks, which they made with a bamboo brush, that they bonded themselves to the adventure. Kan Wong gained the

signing table. Picking up the brush, he set his name, the name of one of the Dragon's blood, to the contract, accepted a duplicate, and stepped back into the waiting line.

His pay and his rations, he was told, would begin two days hence, when he was to report to the fire junk now lying at the dock, awaiting the human cargo of which he was a part. Kan Wong memorized the directions as he turned away from his instructing countryman. Of the Foreign Devil he took no further notice. Time enough for that when he passed into service. The God of Luck had smiled upon his boldness, and, reflecting upon it, Kan Wong turned back to the river and the sampan that had so long been his floating home. No sentimental memories, however, clung about it for him. Its freight of dreams he had landed here in Shanghai, marketing them for a realization. The sampan now was but the empty shell of a water beetle, that had crawled upon the bank into the sun of Fortune to spill forth a dragon fly to try newly found wings of adventure.

He found a customer, and, with much haggling after the manner of his kind, disposed of his boat, the last tie, if tie there was, that bound him to his present life. Waterman he had always been, and now had come to him the call of the Father of All Waters. The tang of the salt in his nostrils conjured up dreams as magical as those invoked by the wand of the poppy god. Wrapped in their rosy mantle, he walked the streets for the next two days, and on the third he took his way to the dock where lay the fire junk that was to bear him forth into the wonders of the Foreign Devils' land. Larger she loomed than any he had ever seen, larger, oh, much larger, than those which had steamed up the Yangtze in swanlike majesty. But this huge bulk was grey—grey and squat and powerful. Once aboard, he found it crowded with an army of chattering coolies. They swarmed in the hold like maggots. Every inch of space was given over to them, an army, it seemed to Kan Wong, in which he was all but lost.

Day after day across the waste of water the ship took its eastern way. Never had Kan Wong dreamed

there was so much water in the world. The broad, long river that had been his life's path seemed but a narrow trickle on the earth's face compared with this stretch of sea that never ended, though the days ran into weeks. The land coolies chafed and found much sickness in the swell, but Kan Wong, used ever to a moving deck, found the way none too long, and smiled softly to himself as he counted up the dollars they were paying him for the keenest pleasure he had ever known.

At last land appeared. The ship swung into the dock, disclosing to the questioning eyes of Kan Wong and his kind a new strange land. In orderly discipline they were marched off the vessel and on to the dock. But rest was not theirs as yet, nor was this their final destination. From the fire junk they boarded the flying iron horse of the Foreign Devils; again they were on the move. Swiftly across the land they went, over high mountains crowded with eternal snow, thence down upon brown, rolling plains as wide as the flat stretches of the broad Yangtze Valley; eastward, ever eastward, through a land sparsely peopled for all its virgin fertility. Behind their flying progress the days dropped—one, two, three, four, at last five; and then they entered a more populous region. Kan Wong, his nose flattened against the glass that held the moving picture as in a frame, wondered much at the magic that unrolled to his never-sated eyes. Yet the journey's end was beyond his questioning.

Once more they came to a seaport. Marching from the carriages, once more they beheld the sea. But this time it was different—more turbulent, harsher, more sombre with the hint of waiting storms. Was there, then, more than one ocean, Kan Wong asked himself? He found that it was indeed so when once more a fire junk received them. This one was greyer than the first that they had known. Upon her decks were guns and at her side were other junks, low, menacing, with a demon flurry of vicious speed, and short, squat funnels that belched dense smoke clouds. Within the town were many Foreign Devils, all dressed alike in strange drab uniforms; on the docks and here and there at other places

they bore arms and other unmistakable equipment of fighting men, which even Kan Wong could not but notice.

The grey ship moved out into a cold grey fog. With it were other ships as grey and as crowded, ships that crawled with men, strange Foreign Devils who clanked with weapons as they walked aboard. Again a waste of water, through which the ship seemed to crawl with a caution that Kan Wong felt, but did not understand. With it, on either side, moved those other junks—squat, menacing, standing low on the horizon, but as haunting as dark ghosts. Where were they bound, this strangely mixed fleet? Often Kan Wong pondered this, but gave it no tongue to his fellow-passengers, holding a bit aloof from them by virtue of his caste.

Again they neared the shore, where other boats, low-built and bristling with guns, flew swiftly out to meet them like fierce ocean birds of prey. Now they skirted high, bleak cliffs, their feet hid in a lather of white foam; then they rounded the cliffs and passed into a storm-struck stretch of sea through which they rolled to a more level land, off which they cast anchor. The long ocean journey was finished at last.

There was a frantic bustle at this port, increasing a hundredfold when once they set foot upon the land. Men—men were everywhere; men in various uniforms, men who spoke various tongues in a confusing babel, yet they all seemed intent upon one purpose, the import of which Kan Wong could but vaguely guess. All about them was endless movement, but no confusion, and once ashore their work commenced immediately.

From the fleet of fire junks various cargoes were to be unloaded with all speed, and at this the coolies toiled. Numberless crates, boxes, and bags came ashore to be stowed away in long, low buildings, or loaded into long lines of rough, boxlike carriages that then went scurrying off behind countless snorting and puffing fire-horses to the east, always to the east and north. Strange engines, which the Foreign Devils saw to it that they handled most tenderly, were also much in evidence, and always, at all hours the uniformed men with their bristling arms and clanking equipment crowded into the car-

riages and were whisked off to the east, always to the east and north. They went with much strange shouting and, to Kan Wong's ears, discordant sounds that they mistook for music. Yet now and then other strings of carriages came back from the east and north, with other men—men broken, bloody, lacking limbs, groping in blindness, their faces twisted with pain as they were loaded into the waiting fire-junks to recross the rough sea.

Then came the turn of the coolies to be crowded into the boxlike carriages and to be whisked off to the east. With them went tools—picks, shovels, and the like—for further work, upon the nature of which Kan Wong, unquestioning, speculated. It was a slow, broken journey that they made. Every now and then they stopped that other traffic might pass them, going either way; mostly the strange men in uniforms, bristling with guns, hurrying always to the east and north.

At last they too turned north, and as they did so the country, which had been smiling, low, filled with soft fields and pretty, nestling houses, little towns and quiet, orderly cities, changed to bleak fields, cut and seared as by a simoom's angry breath. Still there were little towns—or what had been little towns, now tumbled ruins—fire-smitten, gutted, their windows gaping like blind eyes in the face of a twisted cripple. Off to the east hung angry clouds from which the thunder echoed distantly; a thunder low, grumbling, continual, menacing, and through the clouds at night were lightning flashes of an angry red. Toward this storm it seemed that all the men were hurrying, and so too were the coolies of whom Kan Wong was one. Often they chattered speculatively of the storm beyond. What did it mean? Why did the men hurry toward instead of away from it? Truly the ways of the Foreign Devils were strange!

As they drew nearer to the storm, the river dreams of Kan Wong returned. This was indeed the land of the Dragon's wrath. The torn and harrowed fields, the empty, broken towns, the distant, grumbling storm, and the armed men, hurrying, always hurrying, toward the east and north where the clouds darkened and spread

—all this was in the tales that his father's father had told him of those fifteen mad years when the Yangtze Valley crouched trembling under the fiery breath of the Dragon's wrath. Here once more he saw the crumbling towers and walls of Hang Gow in fresh ruin. Here was the ruthless wreck that even nature in her fiercest mood could never make. Truly the lure of the Dragon's blood in him was drawing him, magnet-like, to the glory of his ancestors.

The one who had them in charge and spoke their tongue gave them their tools and bade them dig narrow ditches, head deep. From them they ran tunnels into deep caves hollowed out far under the ground. They burrowed like moles, cutting galleries here and there, reinforcing them with timbers, and lining them with a stone which they made out of dust and water. Many they cut, stretching far back behind the ever-present storm in front of them, while from that storm cloud, in swift and unseen lightning bolts that roared and burst and destroyed their work often as fast as it was completed, fell death among them, who were only labourers, not soldiers, as Kan Wong now knew those Foreign Devils in the strange and dirty uniforms to be.

As the storm roared on, never ceasing, it stirred the Dragon's blood in Kan Wong's veins. The pick and shovel irked his hands as he swung them; his palms began to itch for the weapons that the soldiers bore. Now and then he came upon a gun where it had dropped from its owner's useless hands. He studied its mechanism, even asking the Foreign Devil overseer how it was worked, and, being shown, he remembered and practised its use whenever opportunity offered. He took to talking with his fellow-workers, some of whom had themselves fought with the rebels of New China, who, with just such Foreign Devils' tools, had clipped the claws of the Manchu Dragon, freeing the Celestial Kingdom forever from its crooked grip. He took much interest in these war implements. He became more intimate and friendly with his fellows, feeling them now to be brothers in a danger that had awakened the soldier soul beneath the brown of his coolie skin.

Little could he make of all the strife about him. All of which he was sure was that this was the Dragon's Field, and he, a Son of the Dragon, had been guided to it to fulfil a destiny his forefathers had begun in the Yangtze Valley when with the "Hairy Rebels" they had waged such war as this. The flying death all about him that now and then claimed toll of one of his own kind was but a part of it; but all the time he grew to hate his humble work and long for a part, a real part, in the fighting that raged ahead, where an unseen enemy, of whom he grew to think as his own, hurled destruction among them. Often he spoke of this to the gang under him, imbuing them with the spirit of the Dragon's blood that, eager to fulfil its destiny, once more boiled within him.

Then one day the storm grew more furious. The thunder was a continual roll, and both from the front and rear flew the whining lightning bolts, spewing out death and destruction. Many a coolie fell, his dust buried under the dust of this fierce foreign land, never to be returned and mixed with that of his own Flowery Kingdom. Now and then came "stink pots," filling the air with such foul vapours that men coughed out their lives in the putrid fumes. The breath of the Dragon, fresh from his awful mouth, was wrapped about them in hot wrath.

Past them the soldiers streamed, foul with fight, their hot guns spitting viciously back into the rolling, pungent grey fog that followed them malignantly. Confusion reigned, and in that confusion a perfect riot of death. On all sides the soldiers fell, blighted by the Dragon's breath. The coolies crouched in the heaped-up ruins of their newly dug ditches, knowing not which way to turn, bereft of leadership since the Foreign Devil who commanded them was gone, buried beneath a pile of earth where a giant cracker had fallen.

Suddenly Kan Wong noticed that there were no more soldiers save only those who lay writhing or in still, twisted heaps upon the harrowed ground. The coolie crowd huddled here alone, clutching their futile picks and shovels, grovelling in helpless panic. Disaster had

overtaken them. The Dragon was upon them, and they were unprotected. All about them in scattered heaps lay discarded equipment, guns, even the sharp-barking, death-spitting, tiny instrument that the soldiers handled so lovingly and so gently when it was not in action. But those who manned the weapons had passed on, back through the thick curtain of smoke that hung between them and the comparative safety of the rear.

Kan Wong's eyes were ahead, striving to pierce the pungent veil that hid the enemy. Suddenly his keen eyes noted them—the strange uniforms and stranger faces, ducking forward here and there through the hell of their own making. The blood of the Dragon within him boiled up, now that the enemy was really near enough to feel the teeth and claws of the Dragon's whelps. This was the hour for which he had lived. This was the Tai-ping glory come again for him to share. Reaching down, he picked up the rifle of a fallen soldier, fondled its mechanism lovingly for a moment, and then, cuddling it tenderly beneath his chin, his finger bade it spit death at the misty grey figures crawling through the greyer fog in front.

When the magazine was exhausted he filled it with fresh clips and turned with the authority he had always wielded, and a new one that they instantly recognized, upon his shivering countrymen.

"What are ye?" he yelled with withering scorn. "Sons of pigs who root in the dung of this Foreign Devil's land, or men of the Dragon's blood? Are ye the scum of the Yangtze River or honourable descendants of the Hairy Rebels? Would ye avenge your brothers who have choked to death in the breath of the stink-pots that have been flung among us? Will ye let escape this horde of Foreign Devil enemies who have hurled at us giant crackers that have spit death, now that they are near enough to feel how the Dragon's blood can strike? Here are the Dragon's claws!" He waved his bayoneted gun aloft. "Will ye die like men, or like slinking rats stamped into the earth? All who are not cowards—come!" He waved the way through the smoke to the grey figures emerging from it.

The Chinaman is no coward when once aroused. Death he faces as he faces life, stoically, imperturbably. The coolies, reaching for the nearest weapons, followed the man who showed the Dragon's blood. Many of them understood the use of arms, having borne them for New China. Death was upon them, and they went to meet it with death in their hands.

Kan Wong dragged up an uninjured machine gun, the crew of which lay about it. Fitting the bands of cartridges as he had seen the gunners do, he turned the crank and swung it round on its revolving tripod. Before its vicious rain he saw the grey figures fall, and a great joy welled up in his breast. He signalled for other belts and worked the gun faster. Round him the coolies rallied; others beyond the sound of his voice joined in from pure instinct. The grey figures wavered, hesitated, melted back into the smoke, and then strove to work around the fire of the death-spitting group. But the Dragon's blood was up, the voice of the Dragon's son cheered and directed the snarling, roused whelps to whom war was an old, old trade, forgotten, and now remembered in this strange, wild land. The joy of slaughter came savagely upon them. The death that they had received they now gave back. In the place the white men had fled, the yellow men now stood, descendants of the Tai-pings, as fierce and wild as their once Hairy brothers.

Meanwhile, behind them the retreating line halted, stiffened by hurried reinforcements. The officers rallied their men, paused and looked back through the smoke. The line had given way and they must meet the oncoming wave. Quickly reforming, they picked their ground for a stand and waited. The moments passed, but no sign of the victors.

"What the hell is up?" snarled one of the reinforcing officers. "I thought the line had given way."

"It has," replied the panting, battle-torn commander. "My men are all back here; there's no one in front but the enemy!"

"What's that ahead, then?" The sharp bark of rifles, the *rat-a-tat* of machine guns, the boom of bursting

grenades, and the yells, groans, screams and shouts of the hand-to-hand conflict came through the curtaining smoke in a mad jumble of savage sound.

"Damned if I know! We'd better find out!" They began moving their now rallied men back into it.

Suddenly they came upon it—a writhing mass of jeans-clad coolies, wild-eyed, their teeth bared in devilish, savage grins, their hands busy with the implements of death, standing doggedly at bay before grey waves that broke upon them as a sullen sea breaks and recedes before a jutting point of land.

With the reinforcements the tide turned, ebbing back in a struggling, writhing fury, and soon the ground was clear again of all save the wreck that such a wave leaves behind it. Once the line was re-established and the soldiers holding it steadily, the coolies, once more the wielders of pick and shovel, returned to the work of trench repairing, leaving the fighting to those to whom it belonged.

The officers were puzzled. What had started them? What had injected that mad fighting spirit into their yellow hides? What had caused them to make that swift, wild, wonderful stand?

"Hey, you, John!" The commanding officer addressed one of them when a lull came and they were busy again at the tumbled earth. "What you fight for, hey?"

The coolie grinned foolishly.

"Him say fight. Him heap big man, alle same have Dragon's blood. Him say fight, we fight, *sabe?*" And he pointed to Kan Wong—Kan Wong, his head bleeding from a wound, his eyes glowing with a green fury from between their narrow lids, his long, strong hands, red with blood other than his own, still clutching his rifle with a grip that had a tenderly savage joy in it.

The officer approached him.

"Are you the man who rallied the coolies and held the line?" he asked shortly.

Kan Wong stiffened with a dignity to which he now felt he had a right.

"Me fight," he said quietly—"me fight, coolie fight,

too. Me belong Dlagon's blood. One time my people fighting men; long time I wait."

"You'll wait no longer," said the officer. He unpinned the cross from his tunic and fastened it to the torn, bloody blouse of Kan Wong. "Off to the east are men of your own race, fighting-men from China, Cochin-China. That is the place for a man of the Dragon's blood—and that is the tool that belongs in your hand till we're done with this mess." He pointed to the rifle that Kan Wong still held with a stiff, loving, lingering grip.

And so, on the other side of the world, the Son of the Dragon came to his own and realized the dreams of a glory he had missed.

“ HUMORESQUE ”

By FANNIE HURST

From Cosmopolitan

ON either side of the Bowery, which cuts through like a drain to catch its sewage, Every Man's Land, a reeking march of humanity and humidity, steams with the excrement of seventeen languages, flung in *patois* from tenement windows, fire-escapes, curbs, stoops, and cellars whose walls are terrible and spongy with fungi.

By that impregnable chemistry of race whereby the red blood of the Mongolian and the red blood of the Caucasian become as oil and water in the mingling, Mulberry Street, bounded by sixteen languages, runs its intact Latin length of push-carts, clothes-lines, naked babies, drying vermicelli; black-eyed women in rhinestone combs and perennially big with child; whole families of button-hole makers, who first saw the blue-and-gold light of Sorrento, bent at home work around a single gas flare; pomaded barbers of a thousand Neapolitan amours. And then, just as suddenly, almost without osmosis and by the mere stepping-down from the curb, Mulberry becomes Mott Street, hung in grill-work balconies, the mouldy smell of poverty touched up with incense. Orientals, whose feet shuffle and whose faces are carved out of satinwood. Forbidden women, their white, drugged faces behind upper windows. Yellow children, incongruous enough in Western clothing. A drafty areaway with an oblique of gaslight and a black well of descending staircase. Show-windows of jade and tea and Chinese porcelains.

More streets emanating out from Mott like a handful of crooked, rheumatic fingers, then suddenly the Bowery again, cowering beneath elevated trains, where men, burned down to the butt end of soiled lives, pass in and

out and out and in of the knee-high swinging doors—a veiny-nosed, acid-eaten race in themselves.

Allen Street, too, still more easterly and half as wide, is straddled its entire width by the steely, long-legged skeleton of elevated traffic, so that its third-floor windows no sooner shudder into silence from the rushing shock of one train than they are shaken into chatter by the passage of another. Indeed, third-floor dwellers of Allen Street, reaching out, can almost touch the serrated edges of the elevated structure, and in summer the smell of its hot rails becomes an actual taste in the mouth. Passengers, in turn, look in upon this horizontal of life as they whiz by. Once, in fact, the blurry figure of what might have been a woman leaned out as she passed to toss into one Abrahm Kantor's apartment a short-stemmed pink carnation. It hit softly on little Leon Kantor's crib, brushing him fragrantly across the mouth and causing him to pucker up.

Beneath, where, even in August noonday, the sun cannot find its way by a chink, and babies lie stark naked in the cavernous shade, Allen Street presents a sort of submarine and greenish gloom, as if its humanity were actually moving through a sea of aqueous shadows, faces rather bleached and shrunk from sunlessness as water can bleach and shrink. And then, like a shimmering background of orange-finned and copper-flanked marine life, the brass shops of Allen Street, whole rows of them, burn flamelessly and without benefit of fuel.

To enter Abrahm Kantor's—Brasses—was three steps down, so that his casement show-window, at best filmed over with the constant rain of dust ground down from the rails above, was obscure enough, but crammed with the copied loot of khedive and of czar. The seven-branch candlestick so Biblical and supplicating of arms. An urn, shaped like Rebecca's, of brass all beaten over with little poks. Things: cups, trays, knockers, ikons, gargoyles, bowls, and teapots. A symphony of bells in graduated sizes. Jardinières with fat sides. A pot-bellied samovar. A swinging lamp for the dead, star-shaped. Against the door, an octave of tubular chimes, prisms of voiceless harmony and of heatless light.

Opening this door, they rang gently, like melody heard through water and behind glass. Another bell rang, too, in tilted singsong from a pulley operating somewhere in the catacomb rear of this lambent vale of things and things and things. In turn, this pulley set in toll still another bell, two flights up in Abrahm Kantor's tenement, which overlooked the front of whizzing rails and a rear wilderness of gibbet-looking clothes-lines, dangling perpetual specters of flapping union suits in a mid-air flaky with soot.

Often at lunch, or even the evening meal, this bell would ring in on Abrahm Kantor's digestive well-being, and while he hurried down, napkin often bib-fashion still about his neck, and into the smouldering lanes of copper, would leave an eloquent void at the head of his well-surrounded table.

This bell was ringing now, jingling in upon the slumber of a still newer Kantor, snuggling peacefully enough within the ammoniac depths of a cradle recently evacuated by Leon, heretofore impinged upon you.

On her knees before an oven that billowed forth hotly into her face, Mrs. Kantor, fairly fat and not yet forty, and at the immemorial task of plumbing a delicately swelling layer-cake with broom-straw, raised her face, reddened and faintly moist.

"Isadore, run down and say your papa is out until six. If it's a customer, remember the first asking-price is the two middle figures on the tag, and the last asking-price is the two outside figures. See once, with your papa out to buy your little brother his birthday present, and your mother in a cake, if you can't make a sale for first price."

Isadore Kantor, aged eleven and hunched with a younger Kantor over an oilcloth-covered table, hunched himself still deeper in barter for a large crystal marble with a candy stripe down its center.

"Izzie, did you hear me?"

"Yes'm."

"Go down this minute—do you hear? Rudolph, stop always letting your big brother get the best of you in marbles. Iz-zy!"

" In—a—minute."

" Don't let me have to ask you again, Isadore Kantor!"

" Aw, ma; I got some 'rithmetic to do. Let Esther go."

" Always Esther! Your sister stays right in the front room with her spelling."

" Aw, ma; I got spelling, too."

" Every time I ask that boy he should do me one thing, right away he gets lessons! With me, that lessons-talk don't go no more. Every time you get put down in school, I'm surprise'd there's a place left lower where they can put you. Working-papers for such a boy like you!"

" I'll woik——"

" How I worried myself! Violin lessons yet—thirty cents a lesson out of your papa's pants while he slept! That's how I wanted to have in the family a profession—maybe a musician on the violin. Lessons for you out of money I had to lie to your papa about! Honest, when I think of it—my own husband—it's a wonder I don't potch you just for remembering it. Rudolph, will you stop licking that cake-pan? It's saved for your little brother Leon. Ain't you ashamed even on your little brother's birthday to steal from him?"

" Ma, gimme the spoon?"

" I'll give you the spoon, Isadore Kantor, where you don't want it. If you don't hurry down the way that bell is ringing, not one bite out of your little brother's birthday-cake to-night!"

" I'm goin', ain't I?"

" Always on my children's birthdays a meanness sets into this house! Ru-dolph, will you put down that bowl? Iz-zy—for the last time I ask you—for the last time——"

Erect now, Mrs. Kantor lifted a portentous hand, letting it hover.

" I'm goin', ma; for golly sakes, I'm goin'!" said her recalcitrant one, shuffling off toward the staircase, shuffling, shuffling.

Then Mrs. Kantor resumed her plumbing, and through the little apartment, its middle and only bedroom of three beds and a crib lighted vicariously by the front

room and kitchen, began to wind the warm, the golden-brown fragrance of cake in the rising.

By six o'clock, the shades were drawn against the dirty dusk of Allen Street, and the oilcloth-covered table dragged out center and spread by Esther Kantor, nine in years, in the sturdy little legs bulging over shoe-tops, in the pink cheeks that sagged slightly of plumpness, and in the utter roundness of face and gaze, but mysteriously older in the little-mother lore of crib and knee-dandling ditties and in the ropy length and thickness of the two brown plaits down her back.

There was an eloquence to that waiting, laid-out table, the print of the family already gathered about it; the dynastic high chair, throne of each succeeding Kantor; an armchair drawn up before the paternal moustache-cup; the ordinary kitchen chair of Mannie Kantor, who spilled things, an oilcloth sort of bib dangling from its back; the little chair of Leon Kantor, cushioned in an old family album that raised his chin above the table. Even in cutlery, the Kantor family was not lacking in variety. Surrounding a centerpiece of thick Russian lace were Russian spoons washed in washed-off gilt, forks of one, two, and three tines. Steel knives with black handles. A hart's-horn carving-knife. Thick-lipped china in stacks before the armchair. A round four-pound-loaf of black bread waiting to be torn, and tonight, on the festive mat of cotton lace, a cake of pinkly gleaming icing, encircled with five pink little twisted candles.

At slightly after six, Abraham Kantor returned, leading by a resisting wrist Leon Kantor, his stemlike little legs, hit midship, as it were, by not sufficiently cut-down trousers and so narrow and birdlike of face that his eyes quite obliterated the remaining map of his features, like those of a still wet nestling. All except his ears. They poised at the sides of Leon's shaved head of black bristles, as if butterflies had just lighted there, whispering, with very spread wings, their message, and presently would fly off again. By some sort of muscular contraction, he could wiggle these ears at will, and would do so for a penny, a whistle, and upon one occasion for his brother

Rudolph's dead rat, so devised as to dangle from string and window before the unhappy passer-by. They were quivering now, these ears, but because the entire little face was twitching back tears and gulp of sobs.

"Abrahm—Leon—what is it?" Her hands and her forearms instantly out from the business of kneading something meaty and floury, Mrs. Kantor rushed forward, her glance quick from one to the other of them. "Abrahm, what's wrong?"

"I'll feedle him! I'll feedle him!"

The little pulling wrist still in clutch, Mr. Kantor regarded his wife, the lower half of his face, well covered with reddish bristles, undershot, his free hand and even his eyes violently lifted. To those who see in a man a perpetual kinship to that animal kingdom of which he is supreme, there was something undeniably anthropoidal about Abrahm Kantor, a certain simian width between the eyes and long, rather agile hands with hairy backs.

"Hush it!" cried Mr. Kantor, his free hand raised in threat of descent and cowering his small son to still more undersized proportions. "Hush it, or, by golly, I'll——"

"Abrahm—Abrahm—what is it?"

Then Mr. Kantor gave vent in acidity of word and feature.

... "*Schlemmil!*" he cried. "*Momser! Ganef! Neb-ich!*" By which Abrahm Kantor, in smiting mother tongue, branded his offspring with attributes of apostate and ne'er-do-well, of idiot and thief.

"Abrahm!"

"*Schlemmil!*" repeated Mr. Abraham, swinging Leon so that he described a large semi-circle that landed him into the meaty and waiting embrace of his mother. "Take him! You should be proud of such a little *Momser* for a son! Take him—and here you got back his birthday dollar. A feedle! Honest—when I think on it—a feedle!"

Such a rush of outrage seemed fairly to strangle Mr. Kantor that he stood, hand still upraised, choking and inarticulate above the now frankly howling huddle of his son.

"Abrahm, you should just once touch this child! How he trembles! Leon—mamma's baby—what is it—is this how you come back when papa takes you out to buy your birthday present? Ain't you ashamed?"

Mouth distended to a large and blackly hollow O, Leon, between terrifying spells of breath-holding, continued to howl.

"All the way to Naftel's toy store I drag him. A birthday present for a dollar his mother wants he should have—all right, a birthday present! I give you my word till I'm ashamed for Naftel, every toy on his shelves is pulled down. Such a cow—that shakes with his head——"

"No—no—no!" This from young Leon, beating at his mother's skirts.

Again the upraised but never quite descending hand of his father.

"By golly, I'll 'no—no' you!"

"Abrahm—go way! Baby, what did papa do?"

Then Mr. Kantor broke into an actual tarantella of rage, his hands palms up and dancing.

"What did papa do?' she asks. She's got easy asking. 'What did papa do?' The whole shop, I tell you. A sheep with a baa inside when you squeeze on him—games—a horn so he can holler my head off—such a knife like Izzy's with a scissors in it! 'Leon,' I said, ashamed for Naftel, 'that's a fine knife like Izzy's so you can cut up with.' 'All right then'—when I see how he hollers—'such a box full of soldiers to have war with.' 'Dollar seventy-five,' says Naftel. 'All right then,' I says—when I seen how he keeps hollering—'give you a dollar fifteen for 'em.' I should make myself small for fifteen cents more. 'Dollar fifteen,' I says—anything so he should shut up with his hollering for what he seen in the window."

"He seen something in the window he wanted, Abrahm?"

"Didn't I tell you? A feedle! A four-dollar feedle! A moosiker, so we should have another feedler in the family for some thirty-cents lessons."

"Abrahm—you mean—he—our Leon—wanted a violin?"

" 'Wanted,' she says. I could potch him again this minute for how he wanted it! *Du*—you little bum you—*Chammer—Momser*—I'll feedle you!"

Across Mrs. Kantor's face as she knelt there in the shapeless cotton-stuff uniform of poverty, through the very tenement of her body, a light had flashed up into her eyes. She drew her son closer, crushing his puny cheek up against hers, cupping his bristly little head in her by no means immaculate palms.

"He wanted a violin—it's come, Abrahm! The dream of all my life—it's come! I knew it must be one of my children if I waited long enough—and prayed enough. A musician! He wants a violin. He cried for a violin. My baby! Why, darlink, mamma'll sell her clothes off her back to get you a violin. He's a musician, Abrahm! I should have known it the way he's fooling always around the chimes and the bells in the store!"

Then Mrs. Kantor took to rocking his head between her palms.

"*Oi—oi!* The mother is crazier as her son. A moosican! A *Fresser* you mean. Such an eater, it's a wonder he ain't twice too big instead of twice too little for his age."

"That's a sign, Abrahm; they all eat big. For all we know he's a genius. I swear to you, Abrahm, all the months before he was born, I prayed for it. Each one before they came, I prayed it should be the one. I thought that time the way our Isadore ran after the organ-grinder he would be the one. How could I know it was the monkey he wanted? When Isadore wouldn't take it, I prayed my next one and then my next one should have the talent. I've prayed for it, Abrahm. If he wants a violin, please, he should have it."

"Not with my money."

"With mine! I've got enough saved, Abrahm. Them three extra dollars right here inside my own waist, that I saved toward that cape down on Grand Street. I wouldn't have it now the way they say the wind blows up them——"

"I tell you the woman's crazy!"

"I feel it! I know he's got talent! I know my children so well. A—a father don't understand. I'm so next to them. It's like I can tell always everything that will happen to them—it's like a pain—somewheres here—in back of my heart."

"A pain in the heart she gets!"

"For my own children I'm always a prophet, I tell you. You think I didn't know that—that terrible night after the pogrom after we got out of Kief to cross the border! You remember, Abrahm, how I predicted it to you then—how our Mannie would be born too soon and—and not right from my suffering? Did it happen on the ship to America just the way I said it would? Did it happen just exactly how I predicted our Izzy would break his leg that time playing on the fire-escape? I tell you, Abrahm, I get a real pain here under my heart that tells me what comes to my children. Didn't I tell you how Esther would be the first in her confirmation-class and our baby Boris would be red-headed? At only five years, our Leon all by himself cries for a fiddle—get it for him, Abrahm—get it for him!"

"I tell you, Sarah, I got a crazy woman for a wife! It ain't enough we celebrate eight birthdays a year with one-dollar presents each time and copper goods every day higher. It ain't enough that right to-morrow I got a fifty-dollar note over me from Sol Ginsberg—a four-dollar present she wants for a child that don't even know the name of a feedle!"

"Leon baby, stop hollering—papa will go back and get the fiddle for you now before supper. See—mamma's got money here in her waist——"

"Papa will go back for the feedle not—three dollars she's saved for herself he can holler out of her for a feedle!"

"Abrahm, he's screaming so he—he'll have a fit."

"He should have two fits."

"Darlink——"

"I tell you the way you spoil your children it will some day come back on us."

"It's his birthday night, Abrahm—five years since his little head first lay on the pillow next to me."

"All right—all right—drive me crazy because he's got a birthday."

"Leon baby—if you don't stop hollering you'll make yourself sick. Abrahm, I never saw him like this—he's green——"

"I'll green him. Where is that old feedle from Isadore—that seventy-five-cents one?"

"I never thought of that! You broke it that time you got mad at Isadore's lessons. I'll run down. Maybe it's with the junk behind the store. I never thought of that fiddle, Leon darlink—wait—mamma'll run down and look—wait, Leon, till mamma finds you a fiddle."

The raucous screams stopped then suddenly, and on their very lustiest crest, leaving an echoing gash across silence. On willing feet of haste, Mrs. Kantor wound down backward the high, ladderlike staircase that led to the brass shop.

Meanwhile, to a gnawing consciousness of dinner-hour, had assembled the house of Kantor. Attuned to the intimate atmosphere of the tenement which is so constantly rent with cry of child, child-bearing, delirium, delirium-tremens, Leon Kantor had howled no impression into the motley din of things. Isadore, already astride his chair, well into center-table, for first vociferous tear at the four-pound loaf; Esther Kantor, old at chores, settled an infant into the high chair, careful of tiny fingers in lowering the wooden bib.

"Papa, Izzy's eating first again."

"Put down that loaf and wait until your mother dishes up or you'll get a potch you won't soon forget."

"Say, pop——"

"Don't 'say pop' me! I don't want no street-bum freshness from you!"

"I mean, papa, there was an uptown swell in, and she bought one of them seventy-five-cent candlesticks for the first price."

"*Schlemmil—Chammer!*" said Mr. Kantor, rinsing his hands at the sink. "Didn't I always tell you it's the first price times two when you see up-town business come

in? Haven't I learned it to you often enough a slummer must pay for her nosiness?"

There entered then, on poor shuffling feet, Mannie Kantor, so marred in the mysterious and ceramic process of life that the brain and the soul had stayed back sooner than inhabit him. Seventeen in years, in the down upon his face, and in growth unretarded by any great nervosity of system, his vacuity of face was not that of childhood but rather as if his light eyes were peering out from some hinterland and wanting so terribly and so dumbly to communicate what they beheld to brain-cells closed against himself.

At sight of Mannie, Leon Kantor, the tears still wetly and dirtily down his cheeks, left off his black, fierce-eyed stare of waiting long enough to smile, darkly, it is true, but sweetly.

"Giddy-ap!" he cried. "Giddy-ap!"

And then Mannie, true to habit, would scamper and scamper.

Up out of the traplike stair-opening came the head of Mrs. Kantor, disheveled and a smudge of soot across her face, but beneath her arm, triumphant, a violin of one string and a broken back.

"See, Leon—what mamma got! A violin! A fiddle! Look—the bow, too, I found. It ain't much, baby, but it's a fiddle."

"Aw, ma—that's my old violin—gimme—I want it—where'd you find——"

"Hush up, Izzy! This ain't yours no more. See, Leon, what mamma brought you! A violin!"

"Now, you little *Chammer*, you got a feedle, and if you ever let me hear you holler again for a feedle, by golly if I don't——"

From his corner, Leon Kantor reached out, taking the instrument and fitting it beneath his chin, the bow immediately feeling, surely and lightly for string.

"Look, Abrahm! He knows how to hold it! What did I tell you? A child that never in his life seen a fiddle, except a beggar's on the street!"

Little Esther suddenly cantered down-floor, clapping her chubby hands.

" Looky—looky—Leon ! "

The baby ceased clattering his spoon against the wooden bib. A silence seemed to shape itself.

So black and so bristly of head, his little clawlike hands hovering over the bow, Leon Kantor withdrew a note, strangely round and given up almost sobbingly from the single string. A note of warm twining quality, like a baby's finger.

" Leon—darlink ! "

Fumbling for string and for notes the instrument could not yield up to him, the birdlike mouth began once more to open widely and terribly into the orificial O.

It was then Abrahm Kantor came down with a large hollow resonance of palm against the aperture, lifting his small son and depositing him plop upon the family album.

" Take that ! By golly, one more whimper out of you and if I don't make you black-and-blue, birthday or no birthday ! Dish up, Sarah, quick, or I'll give him something to cry about."

The five pink candles had been lighted, burning pointedly and with slender little smoke wisps. Regarding them owlshly, the tears dried on Leon's face, his little tongue licking up at them.

" Look how solemn he is, like he was thinking of something a million miles away except how lucky he is he should have a pink birthday-cake ! Uh—uh—uh ! Don't you begin to holler again— Here, I'm putting the feedle next to you—uh—uh—uh ! "

To a meal plentifully ladled out directly from stove to table, the Kantor family drew up, dipping first into the rich black soup of the occasion. All except Mrs. Kantor.

" Esther, you dish up ; I'm going somewhere. I'll be back in a minute."

" Where you going, Sarah ? Won't it keep until——"

But even in the face of query, Sarah Kantor was two flights down and well through the lambent aisles of the copper shop. Outside, she broke into a run, through two blocks of the indescribable bazaar atmosphere of Grand Street, then one block to the right.

Before Naftel's show-window, a jet of bright gas burned into a jibberwock land of toys. There was that in Sarah Kantor's face that was actually lyrical, as, fumbling at the bosom of her dress, she entered.

To Leon Kantor, by who knows what symphonic scheme of things, life was a chromatic scale, yielding up to him through throbbing, living nerves of sheep-gut, the sheerest semitones of man's emotions.

When he tucked his Stradivarius beneath his chin, the Book of Life seemed suddenly translated to him in melody. Even Sarah Kantor, who still brewed for him, on a small portable stove carried from city to city and surreptitiously unpacked in hotel suites, the blackest of soups, and, despite his protestation, would incase his ears of nights in an old home-made device against their flightiness, would often times bleed inwardly at this sense of his isolation.

There was a realm into which he went alone, leaving her as detached as the merest ticket purchaser at the box-office.

At seventeen, Leon Kantor had played before the crowned heads of Europe, the aching heads of American capital, and even the shaved head of a South Sea prince. There was a layout of anecdotal gifts, from the molar tooth of the South Sea prince set in a South Sea pearl to a blue-enamelled snuff-box encrusted with the rearing-lion coat of arms of a very royal house.

At eighteen, came the purchase of a king's Stradivarius for a king's ransom, and acclaimed by Sunday supplements to repose of nights in an ivory cradle.

At nineteen, under careful auspices of press-agent, the ten singing digits of the son of Abraham Kantor were insured at ten thousand dollars the finger.

At twenty, he had emerged surely and safely from the perilous quicksands which have sucked down whole Lilliputian worlds of infant prodigies.

At twenty-one, when Leon Kantor played a Sunday-night concert, there was a human queue curling entirely around the square block of the opera-house, waiting its

one, two, even three and four hours for the privilege of standing-room only.

Usually these were Leon Kantor's own people pouring up from the lowly lands of the East Side to the white lands of Broadway, parched for music, these burning brethren of his—old men in that line, frequently carrying their own little folding camp-chairs, not against weariness of the spirit but of the flesh; youth with Slavic eyes and cheek-bones. These were the six-deep human phalanx which would presently slant down at him from tiers of steepest balconies and stand frankly emotional and jammed in the unreserved space behind the railing which shut them off from the three-dollar seats of the reserved.

At a very special one of these concerts, dedicated to the meager purses of just these, and held in New York's super-opera-house, the Amphitheater, a great bowl of humanity, the metaphor made perfect by tiers of seats placed upon the stage, rose from orchestra to dome. A gigantic Colosseum of a cup, lined in stacks and stacks of faces. From the door of his dressing-room, leaning out, Leon Kantor could see a great segment of it, buzzing down into adjustment, orchestra twitting and tuning into it.

In a bare little room, illuminated by a sheaf of roses just arrived, Mrs. Kantor drew him back by the elbow.

"Leon, you're in a draft."

The amazing years had dealt kindly with Mrs. Kantor. Stouter, softer, apparently even taller, she was full of small new authorities that could shut out cranks, newspaper reporters, and autograph fiends. A fitted-over-corsets black taffeta and a high comb in the greying hair had done their best with her. Pride, too, had left its flush upon her cheeks, like two round spots of fever.

"Leon, it's thirty minutes till your first number. Close that door. Do you want to let your papa and his excitement in on you?"

The son of Sarah Kantor obeyed, leaning on his short, rather narrow form in silhouette against the closed door. In spite of slimly dark evening clothes worked out by an astute manager to the last detail in boyish effects, there was that about him which defied long-haired precedent.

Slimly and straightly he had shot up into an unmannered, a short, even a bristly-haired young manhood, disqualifying by a close shave for the older school of hirsute virtuosity.

But his nerves did not spare him. On concert nights they seemed to emerge almost to the surface of him and shriek their exposure.

"Just feel my hands, ma. Like ice."

She dived down into her large silk what-not of a reticule.

"I've got your fleece-lined gloves here, son."

"No—no. For God's—sake—not those things! No!"

He was back at the door again, opening it to a slit, peering through.

"They're bringing more seats on the stage. If they crowd me in I won't go on. I can't play if I hear them breathe. Hi—out there—no more chairs—pa—Hancock——"

"Leon, Leon, ain't you ashamed to get so worked up? Close that door. Have you got a manager who is paid just to see to your comfort? When papa comes, I'll have him go out and tell Hancock you don't want chairs so close to you. Leon, will you mind mamma and sit down?"

"It's a bigger house than the royal concert in Madrid, ma. Why, I never saw anything like it! It's a stampede. God, this is real—this is what gets me, playing for my own! I should have given a concert like this three years ago. I'll do it every year now. I'd rather play before them than all the crowned heads on earth. It's the biggest night of my life—they're rioting out there, ma—rioting to get in."

"Leon, Leon, won't you sit down if mamma begs you to?"

He sat then, strumming with all ten fingers upon his knees.

"Try to get quiet, son. Count—like you always do. One—two—three——"

"Please ma—for God's sake—please—please!"

"Look—such beautiful roses! From Sol Ginsberg, an old friend of papa's he used to buy brasses from

eighteen years ago. Six years he's been away with his daughter in Munich. Such a beautiful mezzo, they say, engaged already for Metropolitan next season."

"I hate it, ma, if they breathe on my neck."

"Leon darlink, did mamma promise to fix it? Have I ever let you plan a concert where you wouldn't be comfortable?"

His long, slim hands suddenly prehensile and cutting a long, upward gesture, Leon Kantor rose to his feet, face whitening.

"Do it now! Now, I tell you! I won't have them breathe on me. Do you hear me? Now! Now! Now!"

Risen also, her face soft and tremulous for him, Mrs. Kantor put out a gentle, a sedative hand upon his sleeve.

"Son," she said, with an edge of authority even behind her smile, "don't holler at me."

He grasped her hand with his two, and, immediately quiet, placed a close string of kisses along it.

"Mamma," he said, kissing them again and again into the palm, "mamma—mamma!"

"I know, son; it's nerves."

"They eat me, ma. Feel—I'm like ice. I didn't mean it; you know I didn't mean it."

"My baby," she said, "my wonderful boy, it's like I can never get used to the wonder of having you! The greatest one of them all should be mine—a plain woman's like mine!"

He teased her, eager to conciliate and ride down his own state of quivering.

"Now, ma—now—now—don't forget Rimsky!"

"'Rimsky!' A man three times your age who was playing concerts before you was born! Is that a comparison? From your clippings-books I can show Rimsky who the world considers the greatest violinist. Rimsky he rubs into me!"

"All right then, the press-clippings, but did Elsass, the greatest manager of them all, bring me a contract for thirty concerts at two thousand a concert? Now I've got you! Now!"

She would not meet his laughter.

"'Elsass!' Believe me, he'll come to you yet. My

boy should worry if he makes fifty thousand a year more or less. Rimsky should have that honour—for so long as he can hold it. But he won't hold it long. Believe me, I don't rest easy in my bed till Elsass comes after you. Not for so big a contract like Rimsky's, but bigger—not for thirty concerts but for fifty!"

"*Brava! Brava!* There's a woman for you. More money than she knows what to do with, and then not satisfied!"

She was still too tremulous for banter.

"'Not satisfied?' Why, Leon, I never stop praying my thanks for you!"

"All right then," he cried, laying his icy fingers on her cheek; "to-morrow we'll call a *Mignon*—a regular old-fashioned Allen Street prayer-party!"

"Leon, you mustn't make fun."

"Make fun of the sweetest girl in this room?"

"'Girl!' Ah, if I could only hold you by me this way, Leon! Always a boy—with me—your poor old mother—your only girl. That's a fear I suffer with, Leon—to lose you to a—girl! That's how selfish the mother of such a wonder-child like mine can get to be."

"All right. Trying to get me married off again. Nice! Fine!"

"Is it any wonder I suffer, son? Twenty-one years to have kept you by me a child. A boy that's never in his life was out after midnight except to catch trains. A boy that never has so much as looked at a girl and could have looked at princesses. To have kept you all these years—mine—is it any wonder, son, I never stop praying my thanks for you? You don't believe Hancock, son, the way he keeps teasing you always you should have a—what he calls—affair—a love-affair? Such talk is not nice, Leon—an affair!"

"Love-affair poppycock!" said Leon Kantor, lifting his mother's face and kissing her on eyes about ready to tear. "Why, I've got something, ma, right here in my heart for you that——"

"Leon, be careful your shirt-front!"

"That's so—so what you call 'tender,' for my best sweetheart that I—oh, love-affair—poppycock!"

She would not let her tears come.

"My boy—my wonder-boy!"

"There goes the overture, ma."

"Here, darlink—your glass of water."

"I can't stand it in here; I'm suffocating!"

"Got your mute in your pocket, son?"

"Yes, ma; for God's sake, yes! Yes! Don't keep asking things."

"Ain't you ashamed, Leon, to be in such an excitement? For every concert you get worse."

"The chairs—they'll breathe on my neck."

"Leon, did mamma promise you those chairs would be moved?"

"Where's Hancock?"

"Say—I'm grateful if he stays out. It took me enough work to get this room cleared. You know your papa he likes to drag in the whole world to show you off—always just before you play. The minute he walks in the room, right away he gets everybody to trembling just from his own excitements. I dare him this time he should bring people—no dignity has that man got, the way he brings everyone."

Even upon her words came a rattling of door, of door-knob and a voice through the clamour.

"Open—quick—Sarah! Leon!"

A stiffening raced over Mrs. Kantor, so that she sat rigid on her chair-edge, lips compressed, eye darkly upon the shivering door.

"Open—Sarah!"

With a narrowing glance, Mrs. Kantor laid to her lips a forefinger of silence.

"Sarah, it's me! Quick, I say!"

Then Leon Kantor sprang up, the old prehensile gesture of curving fingers shooting up.

"For God's sake, ma, let him in! I can't stand that infernal battering."

"Abrahm, go away! Leon's got to have quiet before his concert."

"Just a minute, Sarah. Open quick!"

With a spring, his son was at the door, unlocking and flinging it back.

"Come in, pa."

The years had weighed heavily upon Abraham Kantor in avoirdupois only. He was himself plus eighteen years, fifty pounds, and a new sleek pomposity that was absolutely oleaginous. It shone roundly in his face, doubling of chin, in the bulge of waistcoat, heavily gold-chained, and in eyes that behind the gold-rimmed glasses gave sparkingly forth his estate of well-being.

"Abraham, didn't I tell you not to dare to——"

On excited balls of feet that fairly bounced him, Abraham Kantor burst in.

"Leon—mamma—I got out here an old friend—Sol Ginsberg—you remember, mamma, from brasses——"

"Abraham—not now——"

"Go way with your 'not now!' I want Leon should meet him. Sol, this is him—a little grown-up from such a *Nebich* like you remember him—*nu?* Sarah, you remember Sol Ginsberg? Say—I should ask you if you remember your right hand? Ginsberg & Esel, the firm. This is his girl, a five years' contract signed yesterday—five hundred dollars an opera for a beginner—six rôles—not bad—*nu?*"

"Abraham, you must ask Mr. Ginsberg please to excuse Leon until after his concert——"

"Shake hands with him, Ginsberg. He's had his hand shook enough in his life, and by kings, too—shake it once more with an old bouncer like you!"

Mr. Ginsberg, not unlike his colleague in rotundities, held out a short, a dimpled hand.

"It's a proud day," he said, "for me to shake the hands from mine old friend's son and the finest violinist living to-day. My little daughter——"

"Yes, yes, Gina. Here shake hands with him. Leon, they say a voice like a fountain. Gina Berg—eh, Ginsberg—is how you stage-named her? You hear, mamma, how fancy—Gina Berg? We go hear her, eh?"

There was about Miss Gina Berg, whose voice could soar to the *tirra-lirra* of a lark and then deepen to mezzo, something of the actual slimness of the poor, maligned Elsa so long buried beneath the buxomness of divas.

She was like a little flower that in its crannied nook keeps dewy longest.

"How do you do, Leon Kantor?"

There was a whirl through her English of three acquired languages.

"How do *you* do?"

"We—father and I—travelled once all the way from Brussels to Dresden to hear you play. It was worth it. I shall never forget how you played the 'Humoresque.' It made me laugh and cry."

"You like Brussels?"

She laid her little hand to her heart, half closing her eyes.

"I will never be so happy again as with the sweet little people of Brussels."

"I, too, love Brussels. I studied there four years with Ahrenfest."

"I know you did. My teacher, Lyndahl, in Berlin, was his brother-in-law."

"You have studied with Lyndahl?"

"He is my master."

"I—will I sometime hear you sing?"

"I am not yet great. When I am foremost like you, yes."

"Gina—Gina Berg, that is a beautiful name to make famous."

"You see how it is done? Gins—Berg. Gina Berg."

"Clev-er!"

They stood then smiling across a chasm of the diffidence of youth, she fumbling at the great fur pelt out of which her face flowered so dewily.

"I—well—we—we are in the fourth box— I guess we had better be going—fourth box left." He wanted to find words, but for consciousness of self could not. "It's a wonderful house out there waiting for you, Leon Kantor, and you—you're wonderful, too!"

"The—flowers—thanks!"

"My father, he sent them. Come, father—quick!"

Suddenly there was a tight tensity that seemed to crowd up the little room.

"Abrahm—quick—get Hancock—that first rows of

chairs has got to be moved—there he is, in the wings—see the piano ain't dragged down too far! Leon, got your mute in your pocket? Please Mr. Ginsberg—you must excuse— Here, Leon, is your glass of water. Drink it, I say. Shut that door out there, boy, so there ain't a draft in the wings. Here, Leon, your violin. Got your neckerchief? Listen how they're shouting—it's for you—Leon—darlink—go!”

In the center of that vast human bowl which had finally shouted itself out, slim, boylike, and in his supreme isolation, Leon Kantor drew bow and a first thin, pellucid, and perfect note into a silence breathless to receive it.

Throughout the arduous flexuosities of the Mendelssohn E-minor concerto, singing, winding from tonal to tonal climax, and out of the slow movement, which is like a tourniquet twisting the heart into the spirited *allegro molto vivace*, it was as if beneath Leon Kantor's fingers the strings were living vein-cords, youth, vitality, and the very foam of exuberance racing through them.

That was the power of him—the Vichy and the sparkle of youth, so that, playing, the melody poured round him like wine and went down seething and singing into the hearts of his hearers.

Later, and because these were his people and because they were dark and Slavic with his Slavic darkness, he played, as if his very blood were weeping, the “Kol Nidre,” which is the prayer of his race for atonement.

And then the super-amphitheater, filled with those whose emotions lie next to the surface and whose pores have not been closed over with a water-tight veneer, burst into its cheers and its tears.

There were fifteen recalls from the wings, Abrahm Kantor standing counting them off on his fingers, and trembling to receive the Stradivarius. Then, finally, and against the frantic negative pantomime of his manager, a scherzo, played so lacily that it swept the house in lightest laughter.

When Leon Kantor finally completed his program, they were loath to let him go, crowding down the aisles upon him, applauding up, down, round him, until the

great disheveled house was like the roaring of a sea, and he would laugh and throw out his arm in wide-spread helplessness, and always his manager in the background, gesticulating against too much of his precious product for the money, ushers already slamming up chairs, his father's arms out for the Stradivarius, and, deepest in the gloom of the wings, Sarah Kantor, in a rocker especially dragged out for her, and from the depths of the black-silk reticule, darning his socks.

" *Bravo—bravo!* Give us the 'Humoresque'—Chopin nocturne—polonaise—'Humoresque'! *Bravo—bravo!*"

And even as they stood, hatted and coated, importuning and pressing in upon him, and with a wisp of a smile to the fourth left box, Leon Kantor played them the "Humoresque" of Dvorak, skedaddling, plucking, quirk-ing—that laugh on life with a tear behind it. Then suddenly, because he could escape no other way, rushed straight back for his dressing-room, bursting in upon a flood of family already there before him. Isadore Kantor, blue-shaven, aquiline, and already greying at the temples; his five-year-old son, Leon; a soft little pouter-pigeon of a wife, too, enormous of bust, in glittering ear-drops and a wrist-watch of diamonds half buried in chubby wrist; Miss Esther Kantor, pink and pretty; Rudolph; Boris, not yet done with growing-pains.

At the door, Miss Kantor met her brother, her eyes as sweetly moist as her kiss.

"Leon, darling, you surpassed even yourself!"

"Quit crowding, children! Let him sit down. Here, Leon, let mamma give you a fresh collar. Look how the child's perspired! Pull down that window, Boris. Rudolph, don't let no one in. I give you my word if to-night wasn't as near as I ever came to seeing a house go crazy. Not even that time in Milan, darlink—when they broke down the doors, was it like to-night——"

"Ought to seen, ma, the row of police outside——"

"Hush up, Roody! Don't you see your brother is trying to get his breath?"

From Mrs. Isadore Kantor: "You ought to seen the balconies, mother. Isadore and I went up just to see the jam."

"Six thousand dollars in the house to-night if there was a cent," said Isadore Kantor.

"Hand me my violin please, Esther. I must have scratched it, the way they pushed."

"No, son; you didn't. I've already rubbed it up. Sit quiet, darlink!"

He was limply white, as if the vitality had flowed out of him.

"God! Wasn't it—tremendous?"

"Six thousand if there was a cent," repeated Isadore Kantor; "more than Rimsky ever played to in his life!"

"Oh, Izzy, you make me sick, always counting—counting."

"Your sister's right, Isadore. You got nothing to complain of if there was only six hundred in the house. A boy whose fiddle has made already enough to set you up in such a fine business, his brother Boris in such a fine college, automobiles—style—and now because Vladimir Rimsky, three times his age, gets signed up with Elsass for a few thousand more a year, right away the family gets a long face——"

"Ma, please; Isadore didn't mean it that way!"

"Pa's knocking, ma; shall I let him in?"

"Let him in, Roody. I'd like to know what good it will do to try to keep him out."

In an actual rain of perspiration, his tie slid well under one ear, Abrahm Kantor burst in, mouthing the words before his acute state of strangulation would let them out.

"Elsass—it's Elsass outside—he—wants—to sign—Leon—fifty concerts—coast to coast—two thousand—next season—he's got the papers—already drawn up—the pen outside waiting——"

"Abrahm!"

"Pa!"

In the silence that followed, Isadore Kantor, a poppiness of stare and a violent redness set in, suddenly turned to his five-year-old son, sticky with lollypop, and came down soundly and with smack against the infantile, the slightly outstanding, and unsuspecting ear.

"Momser!" he cried. "*Chammer! Lump! Ganef!*"

You hear that? Two thousand! Two thousand! Didn't I tell you—didn't I tell you to practise?"

Even as Leon Kantor put pen to this princely document, Francis Ferdinand of Austria, the assassin's bullet true, lay dead in state, and let slip were the dogs of war.

In the next years, men, forty deep, were to die in piles; hayricks of fields to become human hayricks of battlefields; Belgium disembowelled, her very entrails dragging to find all the civilized world her champion, and between the poppies of Flanders, crosses, thousands upon thousands of them, to mark the places where the youth of her allies fell, avenging outrage. Seas, even when calmest, were to become terrible, and men's heart-beats, a bit sluggish with the fatty degeneration of a sluggish peace, to quicken and then to throb with the rat-a-tat-tat, the rat-a-tat-tat of the most peremptory, the most reverberating call to arms in the history of the world.

In June, 1917, Leon Kantor, answering that rat-a-tat-tat, enlisted.

In November, honed by the interim of training to even a new leanness, and sailing orders heavy and light in his heart, Lieutenant Kantor, on two day's home-leave, took leave of his home, which can be cruelest when it is tenderest.

Standing there in the expensive, the formal, the enormous French parlour of his up-town apartment de luxe, from not one of whose chairs would his mother's feet touch floor, a wall of living flesh, mortared in blood, was throbbing and hedging him in.

He would pace up and down the long room, heavy with the faces of those who mourn, with a laugh too ready, too facetious in his fear for them.

"Well, well, what is this, anyway, a wake? Where's the coffin? Who's dead?"

His sister-in-law shot out her plump, watch-incrusted wrist.

"Don't, Leon" she cried. "Such talk is a sin! It might come true."

"Rosie-Posy-butter-ball," he said, pausing beside her chair to pinch her deeply soft cheek. "Cry-baby-roly-

poly, you can't shove me off in a wooden kimono that way."

From his place before the white-and-gold mantel, staring steadfastly at the floor-tiling, Isadore Kantor turned suddenly, a bit whiter and older at the temples.

"Don't get your comedy, Leon."

"'Wooden kimono'—Leon?"

"That's the way the fellows at camp joke about coffins, ma. I didn't mean anything but fun. Great Scott—can't anyone take a joke?"

"O God! O God!" His mother fell to swaying, softly hugging herself against shivering.

"Did you sign over power of attorney to pa, Leon?"

"All fixed, Izzy."

"I'm so afraid, son, you don't take with you enough money in your pockets. You know how you lose it. If only you would let mamma sew that little bag inside your uniform with a little place for bills and a little place for the asfitidy!"

"Now, please, ma—please! If I needed more, wouldn't I take it? Wouldn't I be a pretty joke among the fellows, tied up in that smelling stuff? Orders are orders, ma; I know what to take and what not to take."

"Please, Leon, don't get mad at me, but if you will let me put in your suitcase just one little box of that salve for your finger tips, so they don't crack——"

Pausing as he paced to lay cheek to her hair, he patted her.

"Three boxes if you want. Now, how's that?"

"And you won't take it out so soon as my back is turned?"

"Cross my heart."

His touch seemed to set her trembling again, all her illy concealed emotions rushing up.

"I can't stand it! Can't! Can't! Take my life—take my blood, but don't take my boy—don't take my boy——"

"Mamma, mamma, is that the way you're going to begin all over again after your promise?"

She clung to him, heaving against the rising storm of sobs.

" I can't help it—can't—cut out my heart from me, but let me keep my boy—my wonder-boy——"

" Oughtn't she be ashamed of herself? Just listen to her, Esther! What will we do with her? Talks like she had a guarantee I wasn't coming back. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if by spring I wasn't tuning up again for a coast-to-coast tour——"

" ' Spring '—that talk don't fool me—without my boy, the springs in my life are over——"

" Why, ma, you talk like every soldier who goes to war was killed. There's only the smallest percentage of them die in battle——"

" ' Spring,' he says; ' spring!' Crossing the seas from me! To live through months with that sea between us—my boy maybe shot—my——"

" Mamma, please!"

" I can't help it, Leon; I'm not one of those fine mothers that can be so brave. Cut out my heart, but leave my boy—my wonder-boy—my child I prayed for!"

" There's other mothers, ma, with sons."

" Yes, but not wonder-sons! A genius like you could so easy get excused, Leon. Give it up. Genius it should be the last to be sent to—the slaughter-pen. Leon darlink—don't go!"

" Ma, ma—you don't mean what you're saying. You wouldn't want me to reason that way. You wouldn't want me to hide behind my—violin."

" I would! Would! You should wait for the draft. With my Roody and even my baby Boris enlisted, ain't it enough for one mother? Since they got to be in camp, all right, I say, let them be there, if my heart breaks for it, but not my wonder-child! You get the exemption, Leon, right away for the asking. Stay with me, Leon! Don't go away! The people at home got to be kept happy with music. That's being a soldier, too, playing their troubles away. Stay with me, Leon! Don't go leave me—don't—don't——"

He suffered her to lie, tear-drenched, back into his arms, holding her close in his compassion for her, his own face twisting.

" God, ma, this—this is awful! Please—you make us

ashamed—all of us! I don't know what to say. Esther, come quiet her—for God's sake quiet her!"

From her place in that sobbing circle, Esther Kantor crossed to kneel beside her mother.

"Mamma, darling, you're killing yourself! What if every family went on this way? You want papa to come in and find us all crying? Is this the way you want Leon to spend his last hour with us——"

"O God—God!"

"I mean his last hour until he comes back, darling. Didn't you just hear him say, darling, it may be by spring?"

"'Spring'—'spring'—never no more springs for me——"

"Just think, darling, how proud we should be. Our Leon, who could so easily have been excused, not even to wait for the draft."

"It's not too late yet—please, Leon——"

"Our Roody and Boris both in camp, too, training to serve their country. Why, mamma, we ought to be crying for happiness! As Leon says, surely the Kantor family who fled out of Russia to escape massacre should know how terrible slavery can be. That's why we must help our boys, mamma, in their fight to make the world free. Right, Leon?"—trying to smile with her red-rimmed eyes.

"We've got no fight with no one! Not a child of mine was ever raised to so much as lift a finger against no one. We've got no fight with no one."

"We have got a fight with some one. With autocracy! Only, this time it happens to be Hunnish autocracy. You should know it, mamma; oh, you should know it deeper down in you than any of us, the fight our family right here has got with autocracy!"

"Leon's right, mamma darling, the way you and papa were beaten out of your country——"

"There's not a day in your life you don't curse it without knowing it! Every time we three boys look at your son and our brother Mannie, born an—an imbecile—because of autocracy, we know what we're fighting for. We know. You know, too. Look at him over

there, even before he was born, ruined by autocracy! Know what I'm fighting for? Why, this whole family knows! What's music, what's art, what's life itself in a world without freedom? Every time, ma, you get to thinking we've got a fight with no one, all you have to do is look at our poor Mannie. He's the answer! He's the answer!"

In a foaming sort of silence, Mannie Kantor smiled softly from his chair beneath the pink-and-gold shade of the piano-lamp. The heterogeneous sounds of women weeping had ceased. Straight in her chair, her great shelf of bust heaving, sat Rosa Kantor, suddenly dry of eye; Isadore Kantor head up. Erect now, and out from the embrace of her daughter, Sarah looked up at her son.

"What time do you leave, Leon?" she asked, actually firm of lip.

"Any minute, ma. Getting late."

This time she pulled her lips to a smile, waggling her forefinger.

"Don't let them little devils of French girls fall in love with my dude in his uniform."

Her pretense at pleasantry was almost more than he could bear.

"Hear! Hear! Our mother thinks I'm a regular lady-killer! Hear that, Esther?"—pinching her cheek.

"You are, Leon—only—only, you don't know it."

"Don't you bring down too many beaus while I'm gone, either, Miss Kantor!"

"I—won't, Leon."

Sotto voce to her: "Remember, Esther, while I'm gone, the royalties from the Discaphone records are yours. I want you to have them for pin-money and—maybe a dowry?"

She turned from him.

"Don't, Leon—don't——"

"I like him! Nice fellow, but too slow! Why, if I were in his shoes, I'd have popped long ago."

She smiled with her lashes dewy.

There entered then, in a violet-scented little whirl,

Miss Gina Berg, rosy with the sting of a winter's night, and, as usual, swathed in the high-napped furs.

"Gina!"

She was for greeting everyone, a wafted kiss to Mrs. Kantor, and then arms wide, a great bunch of violets in one outstretched hand, her glance straight sure and sparkling for Leon Kantor.

"Surprise—everybody—surprise!"

"Why, Gina—we read—we thought you were singing in Philadelphia to-night!"

"So did I, Esther darling, until a little bird whispered to me that Lieutenant Kantor was home on farewell leave."

He advanced to her down the great length of room, lowering his head over her hand, his puttee-clad legs clicked together.

"You mean, Miss Gina—Gina—you didn't sing?"

"Of course I didn't! Hasn't every prima donna a larynx to hide behind?" She lifted off her fur cap, spilling curls.

"Well, I—I'll be hanged!" said Lieutenant Kantor, his eyes lakes of her reflected loveliness.

She let her hand linger in his.

"Leon—you—really going—how—terrible—how—how—wonderful!"

"How wonderful—your coming!"

"I—you think it was not nice of me—to come?"

"I think it was the nicest thing that ever happened in the world."

"All the way here in the train, I kept saying—crazy—crazy—running to tell Leon—Lieutenant—Kantor good-bye—when you haven't even seen him three times in three years——"

"But each—each of those three times we—we've remembered, Gina."

"But that's how I feel toward all the boys, Leon—our fighting boys—just like flying to them to kiss them each one good-bye."

"Come over, Gina. You'll be a treat to our mother. I—well, I'm hanged—all the way from Philadelphia!"

There was even a sparkle to talk then, and a let-up

of pressure. After a while, Sarah Kantor looked up at her son, tremulous but smiling.

" Well, son, you going to play—for your old mother before—you go? It'll be many a month—spring—maybe longer before I hear my boy again except on the disca-phone."

He shot a quick glance to his sister.

" Why, I—I don't know. I—I'd love it, ma, if—if you think, Esther, I'd better."

" You don't need to be afraid of me, darlink. There's nothing can give me the strength to bear—what's before me like—like my boy's music. That's my life, his music."

" Why, yes; if mamma is sure she feels that way, play for us, Leon."

He was already at the instrument, where it lay swathed, atop the grand piano.

" What'll it be, folks? "

" Something to make ma laugh, Leon—something light, something funny."

" ' Humoresque ' ? " he said, with a quick glance for Miss Berg.

" ' Humoresque, ' " she said, smiling back at him.

He capered through, cutting and playful of bow, the melody of Dvorak's, which is as ironic as a grinning mask.

Finished, he smiled at his parent, her face still untearful.

" How's that? "

" It's like life, son, that piece. Laughing and making fun of—the way just as we think we got—we ain't got."

" Play that new piece, Leon, the one you set to music. You know. The words by that young boy in the war who wrote such grand poetry before he was killed. The one that always makes poor Mannie laugh. Play it for him, Leon."

Her plump little unlined face innocent of fault, Mrs. Isadore Kantor ventured her request, her smile tired with tears.

" No, no—Rosa—not now—ma wouldn't want that."

" I do, son; I do! Even Mannie should have his share of good-bye."

To Gina Berg: "They want me to play that little setting of mine of Allan Seeger's poem, 'I have a rendezvous.'"

"It—it's beautiful, Leon! I was to have sung it on my program to-night—only, I'm afraid you had better not——"

"Please, Leon! Nothing you play can ever make me as sad as it makes me glad. Mannie should have too his good-bye."

"All right then, ma, if—if you're sure you want it. Will you sing it, Gina?"

She had risen.

"Why, yes, Leon."

She sang it then, quite purely, her hands clasped simply together and her glance mistily off, the beautiful, the heroic, the lyrical prophecy of a soldier-poet and a poet-soldier.

But I've a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

In the silence that followed, a sob burst out stifled from Esther Kantor, this time her mother holding her in arms that were strong.

"That, Leon, is the most beautiful of all your compositions. What does it mean, son, that word, 'rondyvoo'?"

"Why, I—I don't exactly know. A rendezvous—it's a sort of meeting, an engagement, isn't it, Miss Gina? Gina?"

"That's it, Leon—an engagement."

"Have I an engagement with you, Gina?"

"Oh, how—how I hope you have, Leon!"

"When?"

"In the spring?"

"That's it—in the spring."

Then they smiled, these two, who had never felt more than the merest butterfly wings of love brushing them, light as lashes. No word between them, only an unfinished sweetness, waiting to be linked up.

Suddenly there burst in Abraham Kantor.

"Quick, Leon! I got the car downstairs. Just fifteen minutes to make the ferry. Quick! The sooner we get him over there the sooner we get him back! I'm right, mamma? Now—now—no water-works! Get your brother's suitcase, Isadore. Now—now—no nonsense—quick!"

With a deftly manœuvred round of good-byes, a grip-laden dash for door, a throbbing moment of turning back when it seemed as though Sarah Kantor's arms could not unlock their deadlock of him, Leon Kantor was out and gone, the group of faces point-etched into the silence behind him. The poor mute face of Mannie, laughing softly. Rosa Kantor crying into her hands. Esther, grief-crumpled, but rich in the enormous hope of youth. The sweet Gina, to whom the waiting months had already begun their reality.

Not so, Sarah Kantor. In a bedroom adjoining, its high-ceilinged vastness as cold as a cathedral to her lowness of stature, sobs dry and terrible were rumbling up from her, only to dash against lips tightly restraining them.

On her knees beside a chest of drawers, and unwrapping it from swaddling-clothes, she withdrew what at best had been a sorry sort of fiddle. Cracked of back and solitary of string it was as if her trembling arms, raising it above her head, would make of themselves and her swaying body the tripod of an altar. The old twisting and prophetic pain was behind her heart. Like the painted billows of music that the old Italian masters loved to do, there wound and wreathed about her clouds of song.

But I've a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

THE LUBBENY KISS

By LOUISE RICE

From Ainslee's Magazine

FOR many hours the hot July sun had beaten down upon the upland meadows and the pine woods of the lower New Jersey hills. So, when the dew began to fall, there arose from them a heady brew, distilled from blossoming milkweed and fruiting wild raspberry canes and mountain laurel and dried pine needles.

The Princess Dora Parse took this perfume into her lusty young lungs and blew it out again in a long sigh, after which she bent her first finger over her thumb as one must when one returns what all Romanys know to be "the breath of God." She did this almost unconsciously, for all her faculties were busied in another matter.

The eyes of a gorgio, weakened by an indoor life, would never have been able to distinguish the small object for which the princess looked, for she was perched up on the high seat of the red Romany *wardo*, and she drove her two strong, shaggy horses with a free and careless hand. But to Dora Parse the blur of vague shadows gliding by each wheel was not vague at all. Suddenly she checked her horses and sprang down.

The patteran for which she was looking was laid beneath a clump of the flowering weed which the Romanys call "stars in the sky." The gorgios know it as Queen Ann's lace, and the farmers curse it by the name of the wild carrot. The patteran was like a miniature log cabin without a roof, and across the top one large stick was laid, pointing upward along the mountain road.

Two brown and slender fingers on the big braid which dropped over her shoulder, the princess meditated, a shiver of fear running through her. What, she asked

herself, could this mean? Why, for the first time in years, were the wagons to go to the farm of Jan Jacobus? Even if it were only a chance happening, it was a most unfortunate one, for young Jan, the fair-haired, giant son of old Jacobus, with his light blue eyes and his drawling, insolent speech, was the last person in the world that she wanted to see, especially with her man near.

For she had meant no harm. Many and many a time she had smiled into the eyes of men and felt pride in her power over them. Still—and yet—— The princess scattered the patteran with her foot, for she knew that all the wagons must be ahead of her, since she had lagged so, and she leaped to her seat with one easy, lithe swing and drove on up the darkening road.

Jan Jacobus, like several other descendants of the Dutch settlers of New Jersey, held his upland farm on shares with John Lane's tribe of gypsies. Jacobuses and Bantas and Koppfs, they made no bones about having business dealings with the tribe of English Romanys which had followed a regular route, twice a year, from Maryland to the upper part of New Jersey, since before the beginning of the Revolutionary days. The descendants of the English settlers, the Hardys, the Lesters, the Vincents, and the Farrands, looked with still persisting English reserve upon the roamers of the woods and would have no traffic with them, though a good many of their sons and daughters had to know the few Romany young people who were left, by twos and threes in the towns for occasional years of schooling.

The tribe, trading in land in the two States which they frequented, and breeding horses, was very rich, but not very many people knew that. However, they were conceded to be shrewd bargainers, and when old John bought Martin Debbins' upland and rocky farm, one year, with the money that he had made by a lucky purchase of a gangling colt whose woner had failed rightly to appraise its possibilities as a racer, Boonton and Dover and Morristown laughed.

"*Sal* away," old John retorted pleasantly to the cashier of the bank in Boonton, where the tribe had deposited its surplus funds for many years, "but you won't *sal*

so much when you *dik* what I will make out of that joke."

The cashier thereupon looked thoughtful. It might well be that he and others would not laugh when they saw good fortune which might have been theirs following this genial old outlaw.

That summer the wagons camped on the Debbins place, and old John stocked it with a lot of fine hogs, for which the land was especially adapted. They fattened on the many acres, wooded with wild nut trees, and Jacobus—as keen a bargainer as any Romany, upon whom John Lane had had his eye all the time—took the farm on shares, and every year thereafter the cashier at the bank added a neat little total to the big balance which the tribe was rolling up.

And every year, as the wagons beat up toward Dover in July, old John would drive on ahead and spend a night of mingled business and pleasure with old Jan, reckoning up the profits on the Berkshires for which the farm was now famous, and putting down big mugs of the "black drink" for which Auntie Alice Lee, John Lane's ancient cousin, was equally famous. The amount of this fiery and head-splitting liquor which the two old men thus got away with was afterward gleefully recounted in the wagons and fearfully whispered of in the little Dutch church at Horse's Neck which the Jacobuses had attended for over a hundred years.

But never, as wagon after wagon had gone up the turning that led to the upward farm, had there been a patteran pointing that way. Always, it had shown the way onward and downward, to the little hamlet of Rockaway, where there was an old and friendly camping place, back of the blacksmith shop beyond the church. Old John never encouraged the wagons to visit any of the properties held by the tribe.

"Silver blackens the salt of friendship," he would say.

Dora Parse was driving her own *wardo*, a very fine one which had belonged to her mother. Lester Montague, of Sea Tack, Maryland, who makes the wagons of Romanys for all the Atlantic coast tribes, like his father before him, had done an especially good job of it. The

princess had been certified, by the Romany rites, to old John's eldest son, George, for she had flatly refused to be married according to the gorgio ways. Not having been married a full year, he was not yet entitled to carry the heavy, silver-topped stick which is the badge of the married man, nor could he demand a place in his wife's tent or wagon unless she expressly invited him. Dora Parse and George Lane were passionately in love with each other, and their meeting and mating had been the flowering romance of the tribe, the previous summer.

The princess, being descended from a very old Romany family, as her name showed, was far higher in rank than any one in the Lane tribe. Her aristocratic lineage showed in the set of her magnificent head, in the small, delicate fingers of her hand, and in the fire and richness of her eyes. Also, her skin was of the colour of old ivory upon which is cast a distant, faint reflection of the sunset, and her mouth, thinner than those of most Romanys, was of the colour of a ripe pomegranate.

"*A rauni, a puro rauni,*" all the tribes of the eastern coast murmured respectfully, when Dora Parse's name was mentioned.

She was, indeed, a very great lady, but she was a flirtatious and headstrong girl. She was one of the few modern gypsies who still hold to the unadulterated worship of "those." All the members of John Lane's tribe were Methodists—had been since before they had migrated from England. In every wagon, save Dora's, a large illustrated Bible lay on a little table, and those who could, read them aloud to the rest of a Sunday afternoon. This did not mean, however, that the Romanys had descended to gorgio ways, or that they had wholly left off their attentions to "those." They combined the two. Old John was known as a fervent and eloquent leader in prayer at the Wednesday-night prayer meetings in the Maryland town where his church membership was held, but he had not ceased to carry the "box of meanings," as befitted the chief of the tribe.

This was a very beautifully worked box of pure gold, made by the great Nikola of Budapest, whose boxes can be found inside the shirt of every gypsy chief, where

they are always carried. In them are some grains of wheat, garnered by moonlight, a peacock's feather, and a small silver bell with a coiled snake for a handle. When anything is to be decided, a few of the grains are taken out and counted. If they are even, the omen is bad, but if they are odd, all is well. Old John had an elastic and accommodating mind, like all Romanys, so he never thought it strange that he should ask the "box of meanings" whether or not it was going to storm on prayer-meeting nights.

Dora Parse thought of the box now, and wished that she might have the peacock's feather for a minute, so that her uneasy sense of impending bad luck would leave her. Then she stopped beside a cross-barred gate where an old man was evidently waiting for her.

"Lane was gettin' troubled about yuh," he said, as he turned the horses and peered curiously up at her. He knew who she was, not only because John Lane had said who it was who was late, but because Dora Parse's appearance was well known to the whole countryside. She was the only member of the tribe who kept to the full Romany dress. There were big gold loops in her small ears, and on her arms, many gold bracelets, whose lightness testified to their freedom from alloy. Her skirt was of red, heavily embroidered in blue, and her waist, with short sleeves, was of sheer white cloth, with an embroidered bolero. Her hair she wore in the ancient fashion, in two braids on either side of her face. She could well afford to, the chis muttered among themselves. Any girl with hair like that——

There was a long lane leading to the barns and to the meadow back of them, and there, said Jan, the tribe was to camp. As the princess drove along the short distance, she swiftly snatched off her little bolero, put it on wrong side out, and then snatched it off and righted it. That much, at least, she could do to avert ill luck. And her heart bounded as she drove in among the other wagons, for her husband came running to meet her and held out his arms.

She dropped into them and laid each finger tip, delicately, in succession, upon his eyes and his ears and

his mouth, the seal of a betrothal and the sign whereby a Romany chal may know that a chi intends to accept him when he speaks for her before the tribe; a sign that lovers repeat as a sacred and intimate caress. She leaned, hard, into his arms, and he held her, pressing the tender, confidential kiss that is given to children behind her little ear.

Dora Parse suddenly ran both hands through his thick hair and gave it a little pull. She always did that when her spirits rose. Then she turned and looked at the scene, and at once she knew that there was to be some special occasion. Aunty Alice Lee was seated by a cooking fire, on which stood the enormous iron pot in which the "big meals" were prepared, when the tribe was to eat together and not in separate groups, as it usually did. There were some boards laid on wooden horses, and Pyramus Lee, aunty's grandson, was bringing blocks of wood from the woodshed for seats. Dora Parse clapped her hands with delight and looked at her man.

"*Tetcho!*" she exclaimed, approvingly, using the word that spells all degrees of satisfaction. "And what is it for, stickless one? Is it a talk over silver?"

"Yes, it is some business," George Lane replied, "but first there will be a *gillie shoon*."

A *gillie shoon* has its counterpart in the English word "singsong," as it is beginning to be used now, with this exception: Romanies have few "fixed" songs. They have strains which are set, which every one knows, but a *gillie shoon* means that the performers improvise continually; and in this sense it is a mystic ceremony, never held at an appointed time, except a "time of Mul-cerus," which really means a sort of religious wave of feeling, which strikes tribe after tribe, usually in the spring.

"Marda has come back," Aunty Lee called out to Dora Parse. No one ever called her by her full name of Marda Lee, because she was a Lee only by courtesy, having been adopted from a distant wagon when both her parents were killed in a thunderstorm. Marda, wearing the trim tailored skirt and waist that were her usual costume, was putting the big red tablecloth of the "big

meals" on the boards. Dora went quickly toward the young girl and embraced her.

"How is our little scholar?" she asked affectionately.

"I am very well, Dora Parse, but a little tired," Marda answered.

"And did you receive another paper?"

"Yes. I passed my exams. It will save me half a year in Dover."

"That is good," Dora Parse replied, although she had only the dimmest idea of what Marda meant. The young girl knew that. She had just come from taking a special course in Columbia, and she was feeling the breach between herself and her people to be especially wide. Because of that, perhaps, she also felt more loving toward all of them than she ever had, and especially toward Dora, about whom she knew something that was most alarming. Dora Parse noted the pale, grave face of her favourite friend with concern.

"Smile, bird of my heart," she entreated, "for we are to have a *gillie shoon*. Sit near me, that I may follow your heaven voice."

There was no flattery meant. The Romanys call the soprano "the heaven voice," the tenor "the sky voice," the contralto "the earth voice," and the basso "the sea voice." Dora had a really wonderful earth voice, almost as wonderful as Marda's heaven voice, which would have been remarkable even among opera singers, and the two were known everywhere for their improvisations. In answer to the remark of the princess, Marda gave her a strange look and said:

"I shall be near you, Dora Parse. Do not forget."

Her manner was certainly peculiar, the princess thought, as she walked away. But then one never knew what Marda was thinking about. Her great education set her apart from others. Any chi who habitually read herself to sleep over those most *puro libros*, "The Works of William Shakespeare, in Eight Volumes, Complete, with Glossary and Appendix," must not be judged by ordinary standards. The princess knew the full title of those *puro libros*, having painfully spelled it out, all one rainy afternoon, in Marda's mother's wagon,

with repeated assistance and explanations from Marda, which had left the princess with a headache.

Now Aunt Lee took off the heavy iron cover of the pot and the odour of Romanyn duck stew, than which there is nothing in the world more appetizing, mingled with the sweet fragrance of the drying hay. Aunt Lee thrust a fork as long as a poker into the bubbling mass and then gave the call that brings the tribe in a hurry.

"Empo!" she said in her shrill, cracked voice. "Empo! Empo!"

Laughing, teasing, jostling, talking, they all came, spilling out from the wagons, running from the barn, sauntering in, the lovers, by twos, and sat down before the plates heaped high with the duck and the vegetables with which it was cooked and the big loaves of Italian bread which the Romanys like and always buy as they pass through towns where there are Italian bakeries.

But they sat quiet then, and each one looked toward the princess, as politeness demanded, since she was the highest in rank among them.

She drew a sliver of meat from her plate and tossed it over her shoulder.

"To the great *ré*," she said.

"To the *shule*," each one murmured. Then, having paid their compliments to the sun and the moon, as all good Romanys must before eating, they fell to with heartiness.

When they were through, the mothers and the old men cleared away the tables and put the younger children to bed in the wagons, and the princess and George Lane and Marda and young Adam Lane, George's youngest brother, walked up and down, outside the glow from the cooking fire, taking the deep, full breaths which cleanse the mouth and prepare the soul for the ecstasy of song.

The men took away the table and the lanterns which had been standing about, and put out the cooking fire, for the big moon was rolling up over the treetops, and Romanys sing by her light alone, if they can. Frogs were calling in the shallow stretches of the Upper Rockaway. People began to sit down in a big circle.

Then Marda started the *gillie shoon*. At first you could not have been sure whether the sound was far or near, for she "covered" her tones, in a way that many a gorgio gives years and much silver to learn. Then the wonderful tone swelled out, as if an organ stop were being pulled open, and one by one, the four leaders cast in the dropping notes which followed and sustained the theme that Marda was weaving:

"Lal—la—ai—lala—lalu! Ai—l-a-a—lalu!"

Old John, who had not appeared before, slid into the circle, holding by the sleeve a giant of a man who seemed to come half unwillingly. Dora Parse saw him, and she could not repress the shiver that ran through her at the sight of young Jan Jacobus, yet she sang on. The deep, majestic basses throbbed out the foundation of the great, fuguelike chorus, and the sopranos soared and soared until they were singing falsetto, according to gorgio standards, only it sounded like the sweetly piercing high notes of violins, and the tenors and contraltos wove a garland of glancing melody between the two. They were all singing now. Rocking back and forth a little, swaying gently from side to side, lovers clasped together, mothers in their young sons' arms, and fathers clasping their daughters, they sent out to the velvet arch above them the heart cry of a race, proud and humble, cleanly voluptuous, strong and cruel, passionate and loving, elemental like the north wind and subtle as the fragrance of the poppy.

"Ai—lallu! Ai—lala—lala! Ai—lallu!"

Jan Jacobus sat with his big jaw dropping. Stupid boor that he was, he could not have explained the terrifying effect which this wild music and those tense, uplifting faces had upon him, but he would have given anything to be back in his mother's kitchen, with the lamp lit and the dark, unfamiliar night shut out.

As suddenly as the singing had begun, it stopped. People coughed, moved a little, whispered to one another. Then George Lane stood upon his feet, pulling Dora Parse with him.

"You see her?" he asked them all, holding out his wife in his arms.

Dora Parse knew then, for he was beginning the ritual of the man or woman who accuses a partner, before the tribe, of unfaithfulness. He was using the most *puro* Romany *jib*, for only so can the serious affairs of the tribe tribunal be conducted. Dora Parse struggled in the strong hands of her man.

"No! No!" she cried. "No—no!"

"You see her?" George Lane repeated to the circle.

"We see her," they answered in a murmur that ran around from end to end.

"She is mine?"

"She is yours."

"What shall be done to her if she has lost the spirit of our love?"

Again Dora Parse furiously struggled, but George Lane held her.

"What shall be done with her? If that is so?"

Aunty Lee, as the oldest woman present, now took up the replies, as was her right and duty:

"Let her go to that other, if she wishes, and do you close your tent and your wagon against her."

"And if she does not wish?"

"Then punish her."

"What shall be done to the man?"

"Is he a Romany?"

"No."

Jan Jacobus half started up, but strong hands instantly jerked him down.

"He is a gorgio?"

"Yes."

"Do nothing. We do not soil our hands with gorgios. Let the woman bear the blame. She is a Romany. She should have known better. She is a woman, the wiser sex. It is her fault. Let her be punished."

"Do you all say so?" George Lane demanded.

"We say so." Again the rippling murmur.

Jan Jacobus made a desperate attempt to get on his feet, but, for all his strength, he might as well have tried to uncoil the folds of a great snake as to unbind the many hands that held him, for the Romanys have

as many secret ways of restraining a person as the Japanese.

George Lane drew his wife tenderly close to him.

"She shall be punished," he said, "but first she shall hear, before you all, that I love her and that I know she has not lost the spirit of our love. Her fault was born of lightness of heart and vanity, not of evil."

"What is her fault? Name it," commanded Auntie Lee.

George Lane looked over at Jan.

"Her fault is that she trusted a gorgio to understand the ways of a Romany. For our girls have the spirit of love in their eyes, but no man among us would kiss a girl unless he received the sign from her. But the gorgio men are without honour. To-day, as this woman who is mine stopped to talk with a gorgio, among some trees where I waited, thinking to enter her wagon there, he kissed her, and she kissed him, in return."

"Not with the *lubby* kiss—not with that kiss!" Dora Parse cried. "May I be lost as Pharaoh was in the sea if I speak not the truth!"

The solemn oath, never taken by any Romany lightly and never falsely sworn to, rang out on the still night air. A cold, but firm little hand was slipped into Dora Parse's. Marda was near, as she had promised, and the hot palm of the princess closed gratefully upon it.

George Lane drew his wife upon his breast, and over her glossy head he looked for encouragement to Auntie Lee, who knew what he must do. He was very pale, but he must not hesitate.

"Kiss me, my love," he said, loudly and clearly, "here before my people, that I may punish you. Give me the kiss of love, when tongues and lips meet, that you may know your fault."

Now Dora Parse grew very pale, too, and she leaned far back against her man's arms, her eyes wide with terror. And no one spoke, for in all the history of the tribe this thing had never happened before, though every one had heard of it. Dora Parse knew that, if she refused, her oath would be considered false, and she would be cast out, not only from her husband's tent and wagon,

but from all Romany tribes. And slowly she leaned forward, and George Lane bent down.

Jan Jacobus, although he had not understood the words of the ritual, thought he knew what had happened. The gypsy fool was forgiving his pretty wife. The young Dutchman settled back on his haunches, suddenly aware that he was no longer held. And then, with all the others, he sprang to his feet, for Dora Parse was hanging in her husband's arms, with blood pouring from her mouth and George Lane was sobbing aloud as he called her name.

"What—what—what happened?" Jan stammered. "Gawd—did he kill her?"

Old John Lane, his serene face unruffled, turned the bewildered and frightened boy toward the lane and spoke, in the silky, incisive tones which were half of his enchanting charm.

"Nothing much has happened. One of our girls allowed a gorgio to kiss her, so her man bit off the tip of her tongue. It is not necessary, often, to do it, but it is not a serious matter. It will soon heal. She will be able to talk—a little. It is really nothing, but I thought you might like to see it. It is seldom that gorgios are allowed to see a thing like that.

"Please say to your father that I will spend the evening as usual with him. My people will pass on."

THE TRIAL IN TOM BELCHER'S STORE

By SAMUEL A. DERIEUX

From The American Magazine

IT was a plain case of affinity between Davy Allen and Old Man Thornycroft's hound dog Buck. Davy, hurrying home along the country road one cold winter afternoon, his mind intent on finishing his chores before dark, looking back after passing Old Man Thornycroft's house to find Buck trying to follow him—*trying* to, because the old man, who hated to see anybody or anything but himself have his way, had chained a heavy block to him to keep him from doing what nature had intended him to do—roam the woods and poke his long nose in every briar patch after rabbits.

At the sight Davy stopped, and the dog came on, dragging behind him in the road the block of wood fastened by a chain to his collar, and trying at the same time to wag his tail. He was tan-coloured, lean as a rail, long-eared, a hound every inch; and Davy was a ragged country boy who lived alone with his mother, and who had an old single-barrel shotgun at home, and who had in his grave boy's eyes a look, clear and unmistakable, of woods and fields.

To say it was love at first sight when that hound, dragging his prison around with him, looked up into the boy's face, and when that ragged boy who loved the woods and had a gun at home looked down into the hound's eyes, would hardly be putting it strong enough. It was more than love—it was perfect understanding, perfect comprehension. "I'm your dog," said the hound's upraised, melancholy eyes. "I'll jump rabbits and bring them around for you to shoot. I'll make the frosty hills echo with music for you. I'll follow you everywhere

you go. I'm your dog if you want me—yours to the end of my days."

And Davy, looking down into those upraised, beseeching eyes, and at that heavy block of wood, and at the raw place the collar had worn on the neck, then at Old Man Thornycroft's bleak, unpainted house on the hill, with the unhomelike yard and the tumble-down fences, felt a great pity, the pity of the free for the imprisoned, and a great longing to own, not a dog, but *this* dog.

"Want to come along?" he grinned.

The hound sat down on his haunches, elevated his long nose and poured out to the cold winter sky the passion and longing of his soul. Davy understood, shook his head, looked once more into the pleading eyes, then at the bleak house from which this prisoner had dragged himself.

"That ol' devil!" he said. "He ain't fitten to own a dog. Oh, I wish he was mine!"

A moment he hesitated there in the road, then he turned and hurried away from temptation.

"He *ain't* mine," he muttered. "Oh' dammit all!"

But temptation followed him as it has followed many a boy and man. A little way down the road was a pasture through which by a footpath he could cut off half a mile of the three miles that lay between him and home. Poised on top of the high rail fence that bordered the road, he looked back. The hound was still trying to follow, walking straddle-legged, head down, all entangled with the taut chain that dragged the heavy block. The boy watched the frantic efforts, pity and longing on his face; then he jumped off the fence inside the pasture and hurried on down the hill, face set straight ahead.

He had entered a pine thicket when he heard behind the frantic, choking yelps of a dog in dire distress. Knowing what had happened, he ran back. Within the pasture the hound, only his hind feet touching the ground, was struggling and pawing at the fence. He had jumped, the block had caught, and was hanging him. Davy rushed to him. Breathing fast, he unlicked the chain. The block and chain fell on the other side of the fence, and the dog was free. Shrewdly the boy looked back

up the road; the woods hid the old man's house from view, and no one was to be seen. With a little grin of triumph he turned and broke into a run down the pasture hill toward the pines, the wind blowing gloriously into his face, the dog galloping beside him.

Still running, the two came out into the road that led home, and suddenly Davy stopped short and his face flushed. Yonder around the bend on his grey mare jogged Squire Kirby toward them, his pipe in his mouth, his white beard stuck cozily inside the bosom of his big overcoat. There was no use to run, no use to try to make the dog hide, no use to try to hide himself—the old man had seen them both. Suppose he knew whose dog this was! Heart pounding, Davy waited beside the road.

Mr. Kirby drew rein opposite them and looked down with eyes that twinkled under his bushy white brows. He always stopped to ask the boy how his mother was, and how they were getting along. Davy had been to his house many a time with eggs and chickens to sell, or with a load of seasoned oak wood. Many a time he had warmed before Mr. Kirby's fire in the big living- and bedroom combined, and eaten Mrs. Kirby's fine white cake covered with frosting. Never before had he felt ill at ease in the presence of the kindly old man.

"That's a genuine hound you got there, son, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir," said Davy.

"Good for rabbits an' 'possums an' coons, eh?"

"He shore is!"

"Well, next big fat 'possum you an' him ketch, you bring that 'possum 'round an' me an' you'll talk business. Maybe we'll strike a bargain. Got any good sweet potatoes? Well, you bring four or five bushels along to eat that 'possum with. Haulin' any wood these days? Bring me a load or two of good, dry oak—pick it out, son, hear? How's your ma? All right? That's good. Here——"

He reached deep down in a pocket of his enormous faded overcoat, brought out two red apples, and leaned down out of his saddle, that creaked under the strain of his weight.

"Try one of 'em yourself, an' take one of 'em home to your ma. Git up, Mag!"

He jogged on down the road, and the boy, sobered, walked on. One thing was certain, though, Mr. Kirby hadn't known whose dog this was. What difference did it make, anyhow? He hadn't stolen anything. He couldn't let a dog choke to death before his eyes. What did Old Man Thornycroft care about a dog, anyhow, the hard-hearted old skin-flint!

He remembered the trouble his mother had had when his father died and Old Man Thornycroft pushed her for a note he had given. He had heard people talk about it at the time, and he remembered how white his mother's face had been. Old Man Thornycroft had refused to wait, and his mother had had to sell five acres of the best land on the little farm to pay the note. It was after the sale that Mr. Kirby, who lived five miles away, had ridden over.

"Why didn't you let me know, Mrs. Allen!" he had demanded. "I would have loaned you the money—gladly, gladly!" He had risen from the fire and pulled on the same overcoat he wore now. It was faded then, and that was two years ago.

It was sunset when Davy reached home to find his mother out in the clean-swept yard picking up chips in her apron. From the bedroom window of the little one-storied unpainted house came a bright red glow, and from the kitchen the smell of cooking meat. His mother straightened up from her task with a smile when with his new-found partner he entered the yard.

"Why, Davy," she asked, "where did you get him?"

"He—he just followed me, Ma."

"But whose dog is he?"

"He's mine, Ma—he just took up with me."

"Where, Davy?"

"Oh, way back down the road—in a pasture."

"He must belong to somebody."

"He's just a ol' hound dog, Ma, that's all he is. Lots of hounds don't belong to nobody—everybody knows that, Ma. Look at him, Ma. Mighty nigh starved to death. Lemme keep him. We can feed him on scraps. He can

sleep under the house. Me an' him will keep you in rabbits. You won't have to kill no more chickens. Nobody don't want him but me!"

From her gaunt height she looked down into the boy's eager eyes, then at the dog beside him. "All right, son," she said. "If he don't belong to anybody."

That night Davy alternately whistled and talked to the dog beside him as he husked the corn he had raised with his own hands, and chopped the wood he had cut and hauled—for since his father's death he had kept things going. He ate supper in a sort of haze; he hurried out with a tin plate of scraps; he fed the grateful, hungry dog on the kitchen steps. He begged some vaseline from his mother and rubbed it on the sore neck. Then he got two or three empty gunnysacks out of the corncrib, crawled under the house to a warm place beside the chimney, and spread them out for a bed. He went into the house whistling; he didn't hear a word of the chapter his mother read out of the Bible. Before he went to bed in the shed-room, he raised the window.

"You all right, old feller?" he called.

Underneath the house he heard the responsive tap-tap of a tail in the dry dust. He climbed out of his clothes, leaving them in a pile in the middle of the floor, tumbled into bed, and pulled the covers high over him.

"Golly!" he said. "Oh, golly!"

Next day he hunted till sundown. The Christmas holidays were on and there was no thought of school. He went only now and then, anyway, for since his father's death there was too much for him to do at home. He hunted in the opposite direction from Old Man Thornycroft's. It was three miles away; barriers of woods and bottoms and hills lay between, and the old man seldom stirred beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but Davy wanted to be on the safe side.

There were moments, though, when he thought of the old man, and wondered if he had missed the dog and whether he would make any search for him. There were sober moments, too, when he thought of his mother and Mr. Kirby, and wished he had told them the truth.

But then the long-drawn bay of the hound would come from the bottoms ahead, and he would hurry to the summons, his face flushed and eager. The music of the dog running, the sound of the shots, and his own triumphant yells started many an echo among the silent frosted hills that day. He came home with enough meat to last a week—six rabbits. As he hurried into the yard he held them up for the inspection of his mother, who was feeding the chickens.

"He's the finest rabbit dog ever was, Ma! Oh, golly, he can follow a trail! I never see anything like it, Ma, I never did! I'll skin 'em an' clean 'em after supper. You ought to have saw him, Ma! Golly!"

And while he chopped the wood and milked the cow and fed the mule, and skinned the rabbits, he saw other days ahead like this, and whistled and sang and talked to the hound, who followed close at his heels every step he took.

Then one afternoon, while he was patching the lot fence, with Buck sunning himself near the woodpile, came Old Man Thornycroft. Davy recognized his buggy as it turned the bend in the road. He quickly dropped his tools, called Buck to him and got behind the house where he could see without being seen. The buggy stopped in the road, and the old man, his hard, pinched face working, his buggy whip in his hand, came down the walk and called Mrs. Allen out on the porch.

"I just come to tell you," he cried, "that your boy Davy run off with my dog las' Friday evenin'! There ain't no use to deny it. I know all about it. I seen him when he passed in front of the house. I found the block I had chained to the dog beside the road. I heered Squire Jim Kirby talkin' to some men in Tom Belcher's sto' this very mornin'; just happened to overhear him as I come in. 'A boy an' a dog,' he says, 'is the happiest combination in nater.' Then he went on to tell about your boy an' a tan dog. He had met 'em in the road. Met 'em when? Last Friday evenin'. Oh, there ain't no use to deny it, Mrs. Allen! Your boy Davy—he *stole* my dog!"

"Mr. Thornycroft"—Davy could not see his mother,

but he could hear her voice tremble—"he did *not* know whose dog it was!"

"He didn't? He didn't?" yelled the old man. "An' him a boy that knows ever' dog for ten miles around! Right in front of my house, I tell you—that's where he picked him up—that's where he tolled him off! Didn't I tell you, woman, I seen him pass? Didn't I tell you I found the block down the road? Didn't know whose dog it was? Ridiculous, ridiculous! Call him, ask him, face him with it. Likely he'll lie—but you'll see his face. Call him, that's all I ask. Call him!"

"Davy!" called Mrs. Allen. "Davy!"

Just a moment the boy hesitated. Then he went around the house. The hound stuck very close to him, eyes full of terror, tail tucked as he looked at the old man.

"There he is—with my dog!" cried the old man. "You didn't know whose dog it was, did you, son? Eh? You didn't know, now, did you?"

"Yes!" cried the boy "I knowed!"

"Hear that, Mrs. Allen? Did he know? What do you say now? He stole my dog, didn't he? That's what he done, didn't he? Answer me, woman! You come here!" he yelled, his face livid, and started, whip raised, toward boy and dog.

There were some smooth white stones the size of hen eggs arranged around a flower bed in the yard, and Davy stood near these stones—and now, quick as a flash, he stooped down and picked one up.

"You stop!" he panted, his face very white.

His mother cried out and came running toward him, but Thornycroft had stopped. No man in his right mind wants to advance on a country boy with a rock. Goliath tried it once.

"All right!" screamed the old man. "You steal first—then you try to assault an old man! I didn't come here to raise no row. I just came here to warn you, Mrs. Allen. I'll have the law on that boy—I'll have the law on him before another sun sets!"

He turned and hurried toward the buggy. Davy dropped the rock. Mrs. Allen stood looking at the old miser,

who was clambering into his buggy, with a sort of horror. Then she ran toward the boy.

"Oh, Davy! run after him. Take the dog to him. He's terrible, Davy, terrible! Run after him—anything—anything!"

But the boy looked up at her with grim mouth and hard eyes.

"I ain't a-goin' to do it, Ma!" he said.

It was after supper that very night that the summons came. Bob Kelley, rural policeman, brought it.

"Me an' Squire Kirby went to town this mornin'," he said, "to look up some things about court in the mornin'. This evenin' we run into Old Man Thornycroft on the street, lookin' for us. He was awful excited. He had been to Mr. Kirby's house, an' found out Mr. Kirby was in town, an' followed us. He wanted a warrant swore out right there. Mr. Kirby tried to argue with him, but it warn't no use. So at last Mr. Kirby turned to me. 'You go on back, Bob,' he said. 'This'll give me some more lookin' up to do. Tell my wife I'll just spend the night with Judge Fowler, an' git back in time for court in Belcher's sto' in the mornin'. An', Bob, you just stop by Mrs. Allen's—she's guardian of the boy—an' tell her I say to bring him to Belcher's sto' to-morrow mornin' at nine. You be there, too, Mr. Thornycroft—an', by the way, bring that block of wood you been talkin' about.' "

That was all the squire had said, declared the rural policeman. No, he hadn't sent any other message—just said he would read up on the case. The rural policeman went out and closed the door behind him. It had been informal, hap-hazard, like the life of the community in which they lived. But, for all that, the law had knocked at the door of the Widow Allen, and left a white-faced mother and a bewildered boy behind.

They tried to resume their usual employments. Mrs. Allen sat down beside the table, picked up her sewing and put her glasses on, but her hands trembled when she tried to thread the needle. Davy sat on a split-bottom chair in the corner, his feet up on the rungs, and tried to be still; but his heart was pounding fast and there was a lump in his throat. Presently he got up and

went out of doors, to get in some kindling on the back porch before it snowed, he told his mother. But he went because he couldn't sit there any longer, because he was about to explode with rage and grief and fear and bitterness.

He did not go toward the woodpile—what difference did dry kindling make now? At the side of the house he stooped down and softly called Buck. The hound came to him, wriggling along under the beams, and he leaned against the house and lovingly pulled the briar-torn ears. A long time he stayed there, feeling on his face already the fine mist of snow. To-morrow the ground would be white; it didn't snow often in that country; day after to-morrow everybody would hunt rabbits—everybody but him and Buck.

It was snowing hard when at last he went back into the warm room, so warm that he pulled off his coat. Once more he tried to sit still in the split-bottom chair. But there is no rage that consumes like the rage of a boy. In its presence he is so helpless! If he were a man, thought Davy, he would go to Old Man Thornycroft's house that night, call him out, and thrash him in the road. If he were a man, he would curse, he would do something. He looked wildly about the room, the hopelessness of it all coming over him in a wave. Then suddenly, because he wasn't a man, because he couldn't do what he wanted to do, he began to cry, not as a boy cries, but more as a man cries, in shame and bitterness, his shoulders shaken by great convulsive sobs, his head buried in his hands, his fingers running through his tangled mop of hair.

"Davy, Davy!" The sewing and the scissors slipped to the floor. His mother was down on her knees beside him, one arm about his shoulders, trying to pry his face from his hands, trying to look into his eyes. "You're my man, Davy! You're the only man, the only help I've got. You're my life, Davy. Poor boy! Poor child!"

He caught hold of her convulsively, and she pressed his head against her breast. Then he saw that she was crying, and he grew quiet, and wiped his eyes with his ragged coat sleeve.

"I'm all right now, Ma," he said; but he looked at her wildly.

She did not follow him into his little unceiled bedroom. She must have known that he had reached that age where no woman could help him. It must be a man now to whom he could pin his faith. And while he lay awake, tumbling and tossing, along with bitter thoughts of Old Man Thornycroft came other bitter thoughts of Mr. Kirby, whom, deep down in his boy's heart, he had worshipped—Mr. Kirby, who had sided with Old Man Thornycroft and sent a summons with—no message for him. "God!" he said. "God!" And pulled his hair, down there under the covers; and he hated the law that would take a dog from him and give it back to that old man—the law that Mr. Kirby represented.

It was still snowing when next morning he and his mother drove out of the yard and he turned the head of the reluctant old mule in the direction of Belcher's store. A bitter wind cut their faces, but it was not as bitter as the heart of the boy. Only twice on that five-mile ride did he speak. The first time was when he looked back to find Buck, whom they had left at home, thinking he would stay under the house on such a day, following very close behind the buggy.

"Might as well let him come on," said the boy.

The second time was when they came in sight of Belcher's store, dim yonder through the swirling snow. Then he looked up into his mother's face.

"Ma," he said grimly, "I ain't no thief!"

She smiled as bravely as she could with her stiffened face and with the tears so near the surface. She told him that she knew it, and that everybody knew it. But there was no answering smile on the boy's set face.

The squire's gray mare, standing huddled up in the midst of other horses and of buggies under the shed near the store, told that court had probably already convened. Hands numb, the boy hitched the old mule to the only rack left under the shed, then made Buck lie down under the buggy. Heart pounding, he went up on the store porch with his mother and pushed the door open.

There was a commotion when they entered. The

men, standing about the pot-bellied stove, their overcoats steaming, made way for them. Old Man Thornycroft looked quickly and triumphantly around. In the rear of the store the squire rose from a table, in front of which was a cleared space.

"Pull up a chair nigh the stove for Mrs. Allen, Tom Belcher," he said. "I'm busy tryin' this chicken-stealin' nigger. When I get through, Mrs. Allen, if you're ready I'll call your case."

Davy stood beside his mother while the trial of the negro proceeded. Some of the fight had left him now, crowded down here among all these grown men, and especially in the presence of Mr. Kirby, for it is hard for a boy to be bitter long. But with growing anxiety he heard the sharp questions the magistrate asked the negro; he saw the frown of justice; he heard the sentence "sixty days on the gang." And the negro had stolen only a chicken—and he had run off with another man's dog!

"The old man's rough this mornin'," a man whispered to another above him; and he saw the furtive grin on the face of Old Man Thornycroft, who leaned against the counter, waiting.

His heart jumped into his mouth when after a silence the magistrate spoke: "Mr. Thornycroft, step forward, sir. Put your hand on the book here. Now tell us about that dog of yours that was stole."

Looking first at the magistrate, then at the crowd, as if to impress them also, the old man told in a high-pitched, excited voice all the details—his seeing Davy Allen pass in front of his house last Friday afternoon, his missing the dog, his finding the block of wood down the road beside the pasture fence, his over-hearing the squire's talk right here in the store, his calling on Mrs. Allen, the boy's threatening him.

"I tell you," he cried, "that's a dangerous character—that boy!"

"Is that all you've got to say?" asked the squire.

"It's enough, ain't it?" demanded Thornycroft angrily.

The squire nodded and spat into the cuspidor between his feet. "I think so," he said quietly. "Stand aside.

Davy Allen, step forward. Put your hand on the book here, son. Davy, how old are you?"

The boy gulped. "Thirteen years old, goin' on fo'-teen."

"You're old enough, son, to know the nater of the oath you're about to take. For over two years you've been the mainstay an' support of your mother. You've had to carry the burdens and responsibilities of a man, Davy. The testimony you give in this case will be the truth, the whole truth an' nothin' but the truth, so help you God. What about it?"

Davy nodded, his face very white.

"All right now. Tell us about it. Talk loud so we can hear—all of us."

The boy's eyes never left Mr. Kirby's while he talked. Something in them held him, fascinated him, overawed him. Very large and imposing he looked there behind his little table, with his faded old overcoat on, and there was no sound in the room but the boy's clear voice.

"An' you come off an' left the dog at first?"

"Yes, sir,"

"An' you didn't unfasten the chain from the block till the dog got caught in the fence?"

"No, sir, I didn't."

"Did you try to get him to follow you then?"

"No, sir, he wanted to."

"Ask him, Mr. Kirby," broke in Thornycroft angrily, "if he tried to drive him home!"

"I'll ask him whatever seems fit an' right to me, sir," said Mr. Kirby. "What did you tell your ma, Davy, when you got home?"

"I told her he followed me."

"Did you tell her whose dog he was?"

"No, sir."

"Ain't that what you ought to have done? Ain't it?"

Davy hesitated. "Yes, sir."

There was a slight shuffling movement among the men crowded about. Somebody cleared his throat. Mr. Kirby resumed.

"This block you been tellin' about— how was it fastened to the dog?"

"Thar was a chain fastened to the block by a staple. The other end was fastened to the collar."

"How heavy do you think that block was?"

"About ten pound, I reckon."

"Five," broke in Old Man Thornycroft with a sneer.

Mr. Kirby turned to him. "You fetched it with you, didn't you? I told you to. It's evidence. Bob Kelley, go out to Mr. Thornycroft's buggy an' bring that block of wood into court."

The room was silent while the rural policeman was gone. Davy still stood in the cleared space before Mr. Kirby, his ragged overcoat on, his tattered hat in his hand, breathing fast, afraid to look at his mother. Everybody turned when Kelley came in with the block of wood. Everbody craned their necks to watch, while at the magistrate's order Kelley weighed the block of wood on the store's scales, which he put on the magistrate's table.

"Fo'teen punds," said Mr. Kirby. "Take the scales away."

"It had rubbed all the skin off'n the dog's neck," broke in Davy impulsively. "It was all raw an' bleedin'."

"Aw, that ain't so!" cried Thornycroft.

"Is the dog out there?" asked Mr. Kirby.

"Yes, sir, under the buggy."

"Bob Kelley, you go out an' bring that dog into court."

The rural policeman went out, and came back with the hound, who looked eagerly up from one face to the other, then, seeing Davy, came to him and stood against him, still looking around with that expression of melancholy on his face that a hound dog always wears except when he's in action.

"Bring the dog here, son!" commanded Mr. Kirby. He examined the raw place on the neck. "Any of you gentlemen care to take a look?" he asked.

"It was worse than that," declared Davy, "till I rubbed vase-leen on it."

Old Man Thornycroft pushed forward, face quivering. "What's all this got to do with the boy stealin' "

the dog?" he demanded. "That's what I want to know—what's it got to do?"

"Mr. Thornycroft," said Kirby, "at nine o'clock this mornin' this place ceased to be Tom Belcher's sto', an' become a court of justice. Some things are seemly in a court, some not. You stand back there!"

The old man stepped back to the counter, and stood juggling his chin, his eyes running over the crowd of faces.

"Davy Allen," spoke Mr. Kirby, "you stand back there with your ma. Tom Belcher make way for him. And, Tom, s'pose you put another stick of wood in that stove an' poke up the fire." He took off his glasses, blew on them, polished them with his handkerchief and readjusted them. Then, leaning back in his chair, he spoke.

"Gentlemen, from the beginnin' of time, as fur back as records go, a dog's been the friend, companion, an' protector of man. Folks say he come from the wolf, but that ain't no reflection on him, seein' that we come from monkeys ourselves, an' I believe, takin' all things into account, I'd as soon have a wolf for a ancestor as a monkey, an' a little ruther.

"Last night in the libery of my old friend Judge Fowler in town, I looked up some things about this dog question. I find that there have been some queer decisions handed down by the courts, showin' that the law does recognize the fact that a dog is different from other four-footed critters. For instance, it has been held that a dog has a right to protect not only his life but his dignity; that where a man worries a dog beyond what would be reasonable to expect any self respectin' critter to stand, that dog has a right to bite that man, an' that man can't collect any damages—provided the bitin' is done at the time of the worryin' an' in sudden heat an' passion. That has been held in the courts, gentlemen. The law that holds for man holds for dogs.

"Another thing: If the engineer of a railroad train sees a cow or a horse or a sheep on the track, or a hog, he must stop the train or the road is liable for any damage done 'em. But if he sees a man walkin' along the track, he has a right to presume that the man, bein' a critter of more or less intelligence, will git off, an' he is

not called on to stop under ordinary circumstances. The same thing holds true of a dog. The engineer has a right to presume that the dog, bein' a critter of intelligence, will get off the track. Here again the law is the same for dog an' man.

"But—if the engineer has reason to believe that the man's mind is took up with some object of an engrossin' nater, he is supposed to stop the train till the man comes to himself an' looks around. The same thing holds true of a dog. If the engineer has reason to suspect that the dog's mind is occupied with some engrossin' topic, he must stop the train. That case has been tested in this very state, where a dog was on the track settin' a covey of birds in the adjoinin' field. The railroad was held responsible for the death of that dog, because the engineer ought to have known by the action of the dog that his mind was on somethin' else beside railroad trains an' locomotives."

Again the magistrate spat into the cuspidor between his feet. Davy, still watching him, felt his mother's grip on his arm. Everyone was listening so closely that the whispered sneering comment of Old Man Thornycroft to the man next to him was audible, "What's all this got to do with the case?"

"The p'int I'm gettin' to is this," went on Mr. Kirby, not paying attention to him: "a dog is not like a cow or a horse or any four-footed critter. He's a individual, an' so the courts have held in spirit if not in actual words. Now this court of mine here in Tom Belcher's sto, ain't like other courts. I have to do the decidin' myself; I have to interpret the true spirit of the law, without technicalities an' quibbles such as becloud it in other an' higher courts. An' I hold that since a dog is *de facto* an' *de jure* an individual, he has a right to life, liberty an' the pursuit of happiness.

"Therefore, gentlemen, I hold that that houn' dog, Buck, had a perfect right to follow that boy, Davy Allen, there; an' I hold that Davy Allen was not called on to drive that dog back, or interfere in any way with that dog followin' him if the dog so chose. You've heard the evidence of the boy. You know, an' I know, he has

spoke the truth this day, an' there ain't no evidence to the contrary. The boy did not entice the dog. He even went down the road, leavin' him behind. He run back only when the dog was in dire need an' chokin' to death. He wasn't called on to put that block an' chain back on the dog. He couldn't help it if the dog followed him. He no more stole that dog than I stole him. He's no more a thief than I am. I dismiss this case, Mr. Thornycroft, this case you've brought against Davy Allen. I declare him innocent of the charge of theft. I set it down right here on the records of this court."

"Davy!" gasped Mrs. Allen. "Davy!"

But, face working, eyes blazing, Old Man Thornycroft started forward, and the dog, panting, shrank between boy and mother. "Jim Kirby!" cried the old man, stopping for a moment in the cleared space. "You're magistrate. What you say goes. But that dog thar—he's mine! He's my property—mine by law!" He jerked a piece of rope out of his overcoat pocket and came on toward the cowering dog. "Tom Belcher, Bob Kelley! Stop that dog! He's mine!"

"Davy!" Mrs. Allen was holding the boy. "Don't—don't say anything. You're free to go home. Your record's clear. The dog's his!"

"Hold on!" Mr. Kirby had risen from his chair. "You come back here, Mr. Thornycroft. This court's not adjourned yet. If you don't get back, I'll stick a fine to you for contempt you'll remember the rest of your days. You stand where you are, sir! Right there! Don't move till I'm through!"

Quivering, the old man stood where he was. Mr. Kirby sat down, face flushed, eyes blazing. "Punch up that fire, Tom Belcher," he said. "I ain't through yet."

The hound came trembling back to Davy, looked up in his face, licked his hand, then sat down at the side opposite his former master, looking around now and then at the old man, terror in his eyes. In the midst of a deathly silence the magistrate resumed.

"What I was goin' to say, gentlemen, is this: I'm not only magistrate, I'm an officer in an organization that you country fellers likely don't know of, an organization

known as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. As such an officer it's my duty to report an' bring to trial any man who treats a dumb brute in a cruel an' inhuman way. Mr. Thornycroft, judgin' by the looks of that houn', you ain't give him enough to eat to keep a cat alive—an' a cat, we all know, don't eat much, just messes over her vittles. You condemned that po' beast, for no fault of his own, to the life of a felon. A houn' that ain't happy at best, he's melancholy; an' a houn' that ain't allowed to run free is of all critters the wretchedest. This houn's neck is rubbed raw. God only knows what he's suffered in mind an' body. A man that would treat a dog that way ain't fitten to own one. An' I hereby notify you that, on the evidence of this boy, an' the evidence before our eyes, I will indict you for breakin' the law regardin' the treatment of animals; an' I notify you, furthermore, that as magistrate I'll put the law on you for that same thing. An' it might be interestin' to you to know, sir, that I can fine you as much as five hundred dollars, or send you to jail for one year, or both, if I see fit—an' there ain't no tellin' but what I will see fit, sir."

He looked sternly at Thornycroft.

"Now I'm goin' to make a proposition that I advise you to jump at like you never jumped at anything before. If you will give up that houn' Buck—to me, say, or to anybody I decide will be kind to him—I will let the matter drop. If you will go home like a peaceable citizen, you won't hear no more about it from me; but if you don't—"

"Git out of my way!" cried Old Man Thornycroft. "All of you! I'm goin'—I'm goin'!"

"Hold on!" said Mr. Kirby, when he had got almost to the door. "Do you, in the presence of these witnesses, turn over this dog to me, relinquishin' all claims to him, on the conditions named? Answer Yes or No?"

There was a moment's silence; then the old man cried out:

"Take the old hound! He ain't wuth the salt in his vittles!"

He jerked the door open.

"Yes or no?" called Mr. Kirby inexorably.

"Yes!" yelled the old man, and slammed the door behind him.

"One minute, gentlemen," said Mr. Kirby, rising from the table and gathering his papers and records together. "Just one more thing: If anybody here has any evidence, or knows of any, tendin' to show that this boy Davy Allen is not the proper person to turn over a houn' dog to, I hope he will speak up." He waited a moment. "In the absence of any objections, an' considerin' the evidence that's been given here this mornin', I think I'll just let that dog go back the way he come. Thank you, gentlemen. Court's adjourned!"

PORCELAIN CUPS

By JAMES BRANCH CABELL

From Century Magazine

I

OF GREATNESS INTIMATELY VIEWED

"OH, but they are beyond praise," said Cynthia Allonby, enraptured, "and certainly you should have presented them to the Queen."

"Her majesty already possesses a cup of that ware," replied Lord Pevensey. "It was one of her New Year's gifts, from Robert Cecil. Hers is, I believe, not quite so fine as either of yours; but then, they tell me, there is not the like of this pair in England, nor indeed on the hither side of Cataia."

He set the two pieces of Chinese pottery upon the shelves in the south corner of the room. These cups were of that sea-green tint called *céladon*, with a very wonderful glow and radiance. Such oddities were the last vogue at court in this year of grace 1593: and Cynthia could not but speculate as to what monstrous sum Lord Pevensey had paid for this his last gift to her.

Now he turned, smiling, a really superb creature in his blue and gold. "I had another message from the Queen——"

"George," Cynthia said, with fond concern, "it frightens me to see you thus foolhardy, in tempting alike the Queen's anger and the Plague."

"Eh, as goes the Plague, it spares nine out of ten," he answered, lightly. "The Queen, I grant you, is another pair of sleeves, for an irritated Tudor spares nobody."

But Cynthia Allonby kept silence, and did not exactly

smile, while she appraised her famous young kinsman. She was flattered by, and a little afraid of, the gay self-confidence which led anybody to take such chances. Two weeks ago it was that the painted terrible old Queen had named Lord Pevensey to go straightway into France, where rumour had it, King Henri was preparing to renounce the Reformed Religion, and making his peace with the Pope: and for two weeks Pevensey had lingered, on one pretence or another, at his house in London, with the Plague creeping about the city like an invisible incalculable flame, and the Queen asking questions at Windsor. Of all the monarchs that had ever reigned in England, Elizabeth was the least used to having her orders disregarded. Meanwhile Lord Pevensey came every day to the Marquis of Falmouth's lodgings at Deptford; and every day Lord Pevensey pointed out to the marquis's daughter that Pevensey, whose wife had died in childbirth a year back, did not intend to go into France, for nobody could foretell how long a stay, as a widower. Certainly it was all very flattering . . .

"Yes, and you would be an excellent match," said Cynthia, aloud, "if that were all. And yet, what must I reasonably expect in marrying, sir, the famous Earl of Pevensey?"

"A great deal of love and petting, my dear. And if there were anything else to which you had a fancy, I would get it for you."

Her glance went to those lovely cups and lingered fondly. "Yes, dear Master Generosity, if it could be purchased or manufactured, you would get it for me——"

"If it exists I will get it for you," he declared.

"I think that it exists. But I am not learned enough to know what it is. George, if I married you I would have money and fine clothes and soft hours and many lackeys to wait on me, and honour from all men. And you would be kind to me, I know, when you returned from the day's work at Windsor—or Holyrood or the Louvre. But do you not see that I would always be to you only a rather costly luxury, like those cups, which the Queen's minister could afford to keep for his hours of leisure?"

He answered: "You are all in all to me. You know it. Oh, very well do you know and abuse your power, you adorable and lovely baggage, who have kept me dancing attendance for a fortnight, without ever giving me an honest yes or no." He gesticulated. "Well, but life is very dull in Deptford village, and it amuses you to twist a Queen's adviser around your finger! I see it plainly, you minx, and I acquiesce because it delights me to give you pleasure, even at the cost of some dignity. Yet I may no longer shirk the Queen's business,—no, not even to amuse you, my dear."

"You said you had heard from her—again?"

"I had this morning my orders, under Glorianna's own fair hand, either to depart to-morrow into France or else to come to-morrow to Windsor. I need not say that in the circumstances I consider France the more wholesome."

Now the girl's voice was hurt and wistful. "So, for the thousandth time, is it proven the Queen's business means more to you than I do. Yes, certainly it is just as I said, George."

He observed, unruffled: "My dear, I scent unreason. This is a high matter. If the French King compounds with Rome, it means war for Protestant England. Even you must see that."

She replied, sadly: "Yes, even I! oh, certainly, my lord, even a half-witted child of seventeen can perceive as much as that."

"I was not speaking of half-witted persons, as I remember. Well, it chances that I am honoured by the friendship of our gallant Béarnais, and am supposed to have some claim upon him, thanks to my good fortune last year in saving his life from the assassin Barrière. It chances that I may perhaps become, under providence, the instrument of preserving my fellow countrymen from much grief and trumpet-sounding and throat-cutting. Instead of pursuing that chance, two weeks ago—as was my duty—I have dangled at your apron-strings, in the vain hope of softening the most variable and hardest heart in the world. Now, clearly, I have not the right to do that any longer."

She admired the ennobled, the slightly rapt look which, she knew, denoted that George Bulmer was doing his duty as he saw it, even in her disappointment. "No, you have not the right. You are wedded to your statecraft, to your patriotism, to your self-advancement, or christen it what you will. You are wedded, at all events, to your man's business. You have not the time for such trifles as giving a maid that foolish and lovely sort of wooing to which every maid looks forward in her heart of hearts. Indeed, when you married the first time it was a kind of infidelity; and I am certain that poor dear mouse-like Mary must have felt that often and over again. Why, do you not see, George, even now, that your wife will always come second to your real love?"

"In my heart, dear sophist, you will always come first. But it is not permitted that any loyal gentleman devote every hour of his life to sighing and making sonnets, and to the general solacing of a maid's loneliness in this dull little Deptford. Nor would you, I am sure, desire me to do so."

"I hardly know what I desire," she told him ruefully. "But I know that when you talk of your man's business I am lonely and chilled and far away from you. And I know that I cannot understand more than half your fine high notions about duty and patriotism and serving England and so on," the girl declared: and she flung wide her lovely little hands, in a despairing gesture. "I admire you, sir, when you talk of England. It makes you handsomer—yes, even handsomer!—somehow. But all the while I am remembering that England is just an ordinary island inhabited by a number of ordinary persons, for the most of whom I have no particular feeling one way or the other."

Pevensy looked at her for a while with queer tenderness. Then he smiled. "No, I could not quite make you understand, my dear. But, ah, why fuddle that quaint little brain by trying to understand such matters as lie without your realm? For a woman's kingdom is the home, my dear, and her throne is in the heart of her husband——"

"All this is but another way of saying your lordship

would have us cups upon a shelf," she pointed out—"in readiness for your leisure."

He shrugged, said "Nonsense!" and began more lightly to talk of other matters. Thus and thus he would do in France, such and such trinkets he would fetch back—"as toys for the most whimsical, the loveliest and the most obstinate child in all the world," he phrased it. And they would be married, Pevensey declared, in September: nor (he gaily said) did he propose to have any further argument about it. Children should be seen—the proverb was dusty, but it particularly applied to pretty children.

Cynthia let him talk. She was just a little afraid of his self confidence, and of this tall nobleman's habit of getting what he wanted, in the end: but she dispiritedly felt that Pevensey had failed her. He treated her as a silly infant: and his want of her, even in that capacity, was a secondary matter: he was going into France, for all his petting talk, and was leaving her to shift as she best might, until he could spare the time to resume his love-making

II

WHAT COMES OF SCRIBBLING

Now when Pevensey had gone the room seemed darkened by the withdrawal of so much magnificence. Cynthia watched from the window as the tall earl rode away, with three handsomely clad retainers. Yes, George was very fine and admirable, no doubt of it: even so, there was relief in the reflection that for a month or two she was rid of him.

Turning, she faced a lean dishevelled man, who stood by the Magdalen tapestry scratching his chin. He had unquiet bright eyes, this out-at-elbows poet whom a marquis's daughter was pleased to patronize, and his red hair to-day was unpardonably puzzled. Nor were his manners beyond reproach, for now, without saying anything, he too went to the window. He dragged one foot a little as he walked.

"So my lord Pevensey departs! Look how he rides in

triumph! like lame Tamburlaine, with Techelles and Um-casane and Theridamas to attend him, and with the sunset turning the dust raised by their horses' hoofs into a sort of golden haze about them. It is a beautiful world. And truly, Mistress Cyn," the poet said, reflectively. "that Pevensey is a very splendid ephemera. If not a king himself, at least he goes magnificently to settle the affairs of kings. Were modesty not my failing, Mistress Cyn, I would acclaim you as strangely lucky, in being beloved by two fine fellows that have not their like in England."

"Truly you are not always thus modest, Kit Marlowe——"

"But, Lord, how seriously Pevensey takes it all! and himself in particular! Why, there departs from us, in befitting state, a personage whose opinion as to every topic in the world is written legibly in the carriage of those fine shoulders, even when seen from behind and from so considerable a distance. And in not one syllable do any of these opinions differ from the opinions of his great-great-grandfathers. Oho, and hark to Deptford! now all the oafs in the Corn-market are cheering this bulwark of Protestant England, this rising young hero of a people with no nonsense about them. Yes, it is a very quaint and rather splendid ephemera."

A marquis's daughter could not quite approve of the way in which this shoemaker's son, however talented, railed at his betters. "Pevensey will be the greatest man in these kingdoms some day. Indeed, Kit Marlowe, there are those who say he is that much already."

"Oh, very probably! Still, I am puzzled by human greatness. A century hence what will he matter, this Pevensey? His ascent and his declension will have been completed, and his foolish battles and treaties will have given place to other foolish battles and treaties, and oblivion will have swallowed this glistening bluebottle, plumes and fine lace and stately ruff and all. Why, he is but an adviser to the queen of half an island, whereas my Tamburlaine was lord of all the golden ancient East: and what does my Tamburlaine matter now, save that he gave Kit Marlowe the subject of a drama? Hah, softly

though! for does even that very greatly matter? Who really cares to-day about what scratches were made upon wax by that old Euripides, the latchet of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose? No, not quite worthy, as yet!"

And thereupon the shabby fellow sat down in the tall leather-covered chair which Pevensey had just vacated: and this Marlowe nodded his flaming head portentously. "Hoh, look you, I am displeased, Mistress Cyn, I cannot lend my approval to this over-greedy oblivion that gapes for all. No, it is not a satisfying arrangement that I should teeter insecurely through the void on a gob of mud, and be expected bye and bye to relinquish even that crazy foothold. Even for Kit Marlowe death lies in wait! and it may be, not anything more after death, not even any lovely words to play with. Yes, and this Marlowe may amount to nothing, after all: and his one chance of amounting to that which he intends may be taken away from him at any moment!"

He touched the breast of a weather-beaten doublet. He gave her that queer twisted sort of smile which the girl could not but find attractive, somehow. He said: "Why but this heart thumping here inside me may stop any moment like a broken clock. Here is Euripides writing better than I: and here in my body, under my hand, is the mechanism upon which depend all those masterpieces that are to blot the Athenian from the reckoning, and I have no control of it!"

"Indeed, I fear that you control few things," she told him, "and that least of all do you control your taste for taverns and bad women. Oh, I hear tales of you!" And Cynthia raised a reproving fore-finger.

"True tales, no doubt." He shrugged. "Lacking the moon he vainly cried for, the child learns to content himself with a penny whistle."

"Ah, but the moon is far away," the girl said, smiling—"too far to hear the sound of human crying: and besides, the moon, as I remember it, was never a very amorous goddess—"

"Just so," he answered: "also she was called Cynthia, and she, too, was beautiful."

"Yet is it the heart that cries to me, my poet?" she asked him, softly, "or just the lips?"

"Oh, both of them, most beautiful and inaccessible of goddesses." Then Marlowe leaned toward her, laughing and shaking that disreputable red head. "Still, you are very foolish, in your latest incarnation, to be wasting your rays upon carpet earls who will not outwear a century. Were modesty not my failing, I repeat, I could name somebody who will last longer. Yes, and—if, but I lacked that plaguey virtue—I would advise you to go a-gypsying with that nameless somebody, so that two manikins might snatch their little share of the big things that are eternal, just as the butterfly fares intrepidly and joyously, with the sun for his torch-boy, through a universe wherein thought cannot estimate the unimportance of a butterfly, and wherein not even the chaste moon is very important. Yes, certainly I would advise you to have done with this vanity of courts and masques, of satins and fans and fiddles, this dallying with tinsels and bright vapours; and very movingly I would exhort you to seek out Arcadia, travelling hand in hand with that still nameless somebody." And of a sudden the restless man began to sing.

Sang Kit Marlowe:

"Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

"And we will sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals——"

But the girl shook her small, wise head decisively. "That is all very fine, but, as it happens, there is no such place as this Arcadia, where people can frolic in perpetual sunlight the year round, and find their food and clothing miraculously provided. No, nor can you, I am afraid, give me what all maids really, in their

heart of hearts, desire far more than any sugar-candy Arcadia. Oh, as I have so often told you, Kit, I think you love no woman. You love words. And your seraglio is tenanted by very beautiful words, I grant you, though there is no longer any Sestos builded of agate and crystal, either, Kit Marlowe. For, as you may perceive, sir, I have read all that lovely poem you left with me last Thursday——”

She saw how interested he was, saw how he almost smirked. “Aha, so you think it not quite bad, eh, the conclusion of my ‘Hero and Leander’?”

“It is your best. And your middlemost, my poet, is better than aught else in English,” she said, politely, and knowing how much he delighted to hear such remarks.

“Come, I retract my charge of foolishness, for you are plainly a wench of rare discrimination. And yet you say I do not love you! Cynthia, you are beautiful, you are perfect in all things. You are that heavenly Helen of whom I wrote, some persons say, acceptably enough—— How strange it was I did not know that Helen was dark-haired and pale! for certainly yours is that immortal loveliness which must be served by poets in life and death.”

“And I wonder how much of these ardours,” she thought, “is kindled by my praise of his verses?” She bit her lip, and she regarded him with a hint of sadness. She said, aloud: “But I did not, after all, speak to Lord Pevensey concerning the printing of your poem. Instead, I burned your ‘Hero and Leander’.”

She saw him jump, as under a whip-lash. Then he smiled again, in that wry fashion of his. “I lament the loss to letters, for it was my only copy. But you knew that.”

“Yes, Kit, I knew it was your only copy.”

“Oho! and for what reason did you burn it, may one ask?”

“I thought you loved it more than you loved me. It was my rival, I thought——” The girl was conscious of remorse, and yet it was remorse commingled with a mounting joy.

“And so you thought a jingle scribbled upon a bit of paper could be your rival with me!”

Then Cynthia no longer doubted, but gave a joyous little sobbing laugh, for the love of her disreputable dear poet was sustaining the stringent testing she had devised. She touched his freckled hand caressingly, and her face was as no man had ever seen it, and her voice, too, caressed him.

“Ah, you have made me the happiest of women, Kit! Kit, I am almost disappointed in you, though, that you do not grieve more for the loss of that beautiful poem.”

His smiling did not waver; yet the lean, red-haired man stayed motionless. “Do I appear perturbed?” he said. “Why, but see how lightly I take the destruction of my life-work in this, my masterpiece! For I can assure you it was a masterpiece, the fruit of two years’ toil and of much loving repolishment——”

“Ah, but you love me better than such matters, do you not?” she asked him, tenderly. “Kit Marlowe, I adore you! Sweetheart, do you not understand that a woman wants to be loved utterly and entirely? She wants no rivals, not even paper rivals. And so often when you talked of poetry I have felt lonely and chilled and far away from you, and I have been half envious, dear, of your Heros and your Helens, and your other good-for-nothing Greek minxes. But now I do not mind them at all. And I will make amends, quite prodigal amends, for my naughty jealousy; and my poet shall write me some more lovely poems, so he shall——”

He said “You fool!”

And she drew away from him, for this man was no longer smiling.

“You burned my ‘Hero and Leander’! You! you big-eyed fool! You lisping idiot! you wriggling, cuddling worm! you silken bag of guts! had not even you the wit to perceive it was immortal beauty which would have lived long after you and I were stinking dirt? And you, a half-witted animal, a shining, chattering parrot, lay claws to it!” Marlowe had risen in a sort of seizure, in a condition which was really quite unrea-

sonable when you considered that only a poem was at stake, even a rather long poem.

And Cynthia began to smile, with tremulous hurt-looking young lips. "So my poet's love is very much the same as Pevensy's love! And I was right, after all."

"Oh, oh!" said Marlowe, "that ever a poet should love a woman! What jokes does the lewd flesh contrive!" Of a sudden he was calmer: and then rage fell from him like a dropped cloak, and he viewed her as with respectful wonder. "Why, but you sitting there, with goggling innocent bright eyes, are an allegory of all that is most droll and tragic. Yes, and indeed there is no reason to blame you. It is not your fault that every now and then is born a man who serves an idea which is to him the most important thing in the world. It is not your fault that this man perforce inhabits a body to which the most important thing in the world is a woman. Certainly it is not your fault that this compost makes yet another jumble of his two desires, and persuades himself that the two are somehow allied. The woman inspires, the woman uplifts, the woman strengthens him for his high work, saith he! Well, well, perhaps there are such women, but by land and sea I have encountered none of them."

All this was said while Marlowe shuffled about the room, with bent shoulders, and nodding his tousled red head, and limping as he walked. Now Marlowe turned, futile and shabby-looking, just where Pevensy had loomed resplendent a while since. Again she saw the poet's queer, twisted, jeering smile.

"What do you care for my ideals? What do you care for the ideals of that tall earl whom you have held from his proper business for a fortnight? or for the ideals of any man alive? Why, not one thread of that dark hair, not one snap of those white little fingers, except when ideals irritate you by distracting a man's attention from Cynthia Allonby. Otherwise, he is welcome enough to play with his incomprehensible toys."

He jerked a thumb toward the shelves behind him.

"Oho, you virtuous pretty ladies! what all you value is such matters as those cups: they please the eye, they are worth sound money, and people envy you the possession of them. So you cherish your shiny mud cups, and you burn my 'Hero and Leander': and I declaim all this dull nonsense, over the ashes of my ruined dreams, thinking at bottom of how pretty you are, and of how much I would like to kiss you. That is the real tragedy, the immortal tragedy, that I should still hanker after you, my Cynthia——"

His voice dwelt tenderly upon her name. His fever-haunted eyes were tender, too, for just a moment. Then he grimaced.

"No, I am wrong—the tragedy strikes deeper. The root of it is that there is in you and in all your glittering kind no malice, no will to do harm nor to hurt anything, but just a bland and invincible and, upon the whole, a well-meaning stupidity, informing a bright and soft and delicately scented animal. So you work ruin among those men who serve ideals, not foreplanning ruin, not desiring to ruin anything, not even having sufficient wit to perceive the ruin when it is accomplished. You are, when all is done, not even detestable, not even a worthy peg whereon to hang denunciatory sonnets, you shallow-pated pretty creatures whom poets—oh, and in youth all men are poets!—whom poets, now and always, are doomed to hanker after to the detriment of their poesy. No, I concede it: you kill without premeditation, and without ever suspecting your hands to be anything but stainless. So in logic I must retract all my harsh words; and I must, without any hint or reproach, endeavour to bid you a somewhat more civil farewell."

She had regarded him, throughout this preposterous and uncalled-for harangue, with sad composure, with a forgiving pity. Now she asked him, very quietly, "Where are you going, Kit?"

"To the Golden Hind, O gentle, patient and unjustly persecuted virgin martyr!" he answered, with an exaggerated bow—"since that is the part in which you now elect to posture."

"Not to that low, vile place again!"

"But certainly I intend in that tavern to get tipsy as quickly as possible: for then the first woman I see will for the time become the woman whom I desire, and who exists nowhere." And with that the red-haired man departed, limping and singing as he went to look for a trull in a pot-house.

Sang Kit Marlowe:

"And I will make her beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies;
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

"A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold——"

III

ECONOMICS OF EGERIA

SHE sat quite still when Marlowe had gone.

"He will get drunk again," she thought despondently. "Well, and why should it matter to me if he does, after all that outrageous ranting? He has been unforgivably insulting—Oh, but none the less, I do not want to have him babbling of the roses and gold of that impossible fairy world which the poor, frantic child really believes in, to some painted woman of the town who will laugh at him. I loathe the thought of her laughing at him—and kissing him! His notions are wild foolishness; but I at least wish that they were not foolishness, and that hateful woman will not care one way or the other."

So Cynthia sighed, and to comfort her forlorn condition fetched a hand-mirror from the shelves whereon glowed her green cups. She touched each cup carressingly in passing; and that which she found in the mirror, too, she regarded not unappreciatively, from

varying angles. . . . Yes, after all, dark hair and a pale skin had their advantages at a court where pink and yellow women were so much the fashion as to be common. Men remembered you more distinctively. Though nobody cared for men, in view of their unreasonable behaviour, and their absolute self-centeredness. . . . Oh, it was pitiable, it was grotesque, she reflected sadly, how Pevensey and Kitt Marlowe had both failed her, after so many pretty speeches.

Still, there was a queer pleasure in being wooed by Kit: his insane notions went to one's head like wine. She would send Meg for him again to-morrow. And Pevensey was, of course, the best match imaginable. . . . No, it would be too heartless to dismiss George Bulmer outright. It was unreasonable of him to desert her because a Gascon threatened to go to mass; but, after all, she would probably marry George in the end. He was really almost unendurably silly, though, about England and freedom and religion, and right and wrong things like that. Yes, it would be tedious to have a husband who often talked to you as though he were addressing a public meeting. . . . However, he was very handsome, particularly in his highflown and most tedious moments; that year-old son of his was sickly and would probably die soon, the sweet, forlorn little pet, and not be a bother to anybody: and her dear old father would be profoundly delighted by the marriage of his daughter to a man whose wife could have at will a dozen céladon cups, and anything else she chose to ask for. . . .

But now the sun had set, and the room was growing quite dark. So Cynthia stood a-tiptoe, and replaced the mirror upon the shelves, setting it upright behind those wonderful green cups which had anew reminded her of Pevensey's wealth and generosity. She smiled a little, to think of what fun it had been to hold George back, for two whole weeks, from discharging that horrible old queen's stupid errands.

IV

TREATS PHILOSOPHICALLY OF BREAKAGE

THE door opened. Stalwart young Captain Edward Musgrave came with a lighted candle, which he placed carefully upon the table in the room's centre.

He said: "They told me you were here. I come from London. I bring news for you."

"You bring no pleasant tidings, I fear——"

"As Lord Pevensey rode through the Strand this afternoon, on his way home, the Plague smote him. That is my sad news. I grieve to bring such news, for your cousin was a worthy gentleman and universally respected."

"Ah," Cynthia said, very quiet, "so Pevensey is dead. But the Plague kills quickly!"

"Yes, yes, that is a comfort, certainly. Yes, he turned quite black in the face, they report, and before his men could reach him had fallen from his horse. It was all over almost instantly. I saw him afterward, hardly a pleasant sight. I came to you as soon as I could. I was vexatiously detained——"

"So George Bulmer is dead, in a London gutter! It seems strange, because he was here, befriended by monarchs, and very strong and handsome and self-confident, hardly two hours ago. Is that his blood upon your sleeve?"

"But of course not! I told you I was vexatiously detained, almost at your gates. Yes, I had the ill luck to blunder into a disgusting business. The two rapscallions tumbled out of a doorway under my horse's very nose, egad! It was a near thing I did not ride them down. So I stopped, naturally. I regretted stopping, afterward, for I was too late to be of help. It was at the Golden Hind, of course. Something really ought to be done about that place. Yes, and that rogue Marler bled all over a new doublet, as you see. And the Deptford constables held me with their foolish interrogatories——"

"So one of the fighting men was named Marlowe! Is he dead, too, dead in another gutter?"

"Marlowe or Marler, or something of the sort—wrote plays and sonnets and such stuff, they tell me. I do not know anything about him—though, I give you my word now, those greasy constables treated me as though I were a noted frequenter of pot-houses. That sort of thing is most annoying. At all events, he was drunk as David's sow, and squabbling over, saving your presence, a woman of the sort one looks to find in that abominable hole. And so, as I was saying, this other drunken rascal dug a knife into him——"

But now, to Captain Musgrave's discomfort, Cynthia Allonby had begun to weep heartbrokenly.

So he cleared his throat, and he patted the back of her hand. "It is a great shock to you, naturally—oh, most naturally, and does you great credit. But come now, Pevensey is gone, as we must all go some day, and our tears cannot bring him back, my dear. We can but hope he is better off, poor fellow, and look on it as a mysterious dispensation and that sort of thing, my dear——"

"Oh, Ned, but people are so cruel! People will be saying that it was I who kept poor Cousin George in London this past two weeks, and that but for me he would have been in France long ago. And then the Queen, Ned!—why, that pig-headed old woman will be blaming it on me, that there is nobody to prevent that detestable French King from turning Catholic and dragging England into new wars, and I shall not be able to go to any of the court dances! nor to the masque!" sobbed Cynthia, "nor anywhere!"

"Now you talk tender-hearted and angelic nonsense. It is noble of you to feel that way, of course. But Pevensey did not take proper care of himself, and that is all there is to it. Now I have remained in London since the Plague's outbreak. I stayed with my regiment, naturally. We have had a few deaths, of course. People die everywhere. But the Plague has never bothered me. And why has it never bothered me? Simply be-

cause I was sensible, took the pains to consult an astrol-
oger, and by his advice wear about my neck, night and
day, a bag of dried toad's blood and powdered cinna-
mon. It is an infallible specific for men born in Feb-
ruary. No, not for a moment do I wish to speak harshly
of the dead, but sensible persons cannot but consider
Lord Pevensey's death to have been caused by his own
carelessness."

"Now, certainly that is true," the girl said, bright-
ening. "It was really his own carelessness, and his dear,
lovable rashness. And somebody could explain it to
the Queen. Besides, I often think that wars are good
for the public spirit of a nation, and bring out its true
manhood. But then it upset me, too, a little, Ned, to
hear about this Marlowe—for I must tell you that I
knew the poor man, very slightly. So I happen to
know that today he flung off in a rage, and began drink-
ing, because somebody, almost by pure accident, had
burned a packet of his verses——"

Thereupon Captain Musgrave raised heavy eyebrows,
and guffawed so heartily that the candle flickered. "To
think of the fellow's putting it on that plea! when he
could so easily have written some more verses. That
is the trouble with these poets, if you ask me: they
are not practical even in their ordinary, everyday lying.
No, no, the truth of it was that the rogue wanted a
pretext for making a beast of himself, and seized the
first that came to hand. Egad, my dear, it is a daily
practice with these poets. They hardly draw a sober
breath. Everybody knows that."

Cynthia was looking at him in the half-lit room
with very flattering admiration. . . . Seen thus, with
her scarlet lips a little parted—disclosing pearls—and
with her naïve dark eyes aglow, she was quite incred-
ibly pretty and caressable. She had almost forgotten
until now that this stalwart soldier, too, was in love
with her. But now her spirits were rising venturously,
and she knew that she liked Ned Musgrave. He had
sensible notions; he saw things as they really were, and
with him there would never be any nonsense about top-
lofty ideas. Then, too, her dear old white-haired father

would be pleased, because there was a very fair estate. . . .

So Cynthia said: "I believe you are right, Ned. I often wonder how they can be so lacking in self-respect. Oh, I am certain you must be right, for it is just what I felt without being able quite to express it. You will stay for supper with us, of course. Yes, but you must, because it is always a great comfort for me to talk with really sensible persons. I do not wonder that you are not very eager to stay, though, for I am probably a fright, with my eyes red, and with my hair all tumbling down, like an old witch's. Well, let us see what can be done about it, sir! There was a hand-mirror——"

And thus speaking, she tripped, with very much the reputed grace of a fairy, toward the far end of the room, and standing a-tiptoe, groped at the obscure shelves, with a resultant crash of falling china.

"Oh, but my lovely cups!" said Cynthia, in dismay. "I had forgotten they were up there: and now I have smashed both of them, in looking for my mirror, sir, and trying to prettify myself for you. And I had so fancied them, because they had not their like in England!"

She looked at the fragments, and then at Musgrave, with wide, innocent hurt eyes. She was honestly grieved by the loss of her quaint toys. But Musgrave, in his sturdy, common-sense way, only laughed at her seriousness over such kickshaws.

"I am for an honest earthenware tankard myself!" he said, jovially, as the two went in to supper.

THE HIGH COST OF CONSCIENCE

BY BEATRICE RAVENEL

From *Harper's Magazine*

ANY woman who can accept money from a gentleman who is in no way related to her——" Miss Fowler delivered judgment.

"My dear Aunt Maria, you mean a gentleman's disembodied spirit," Hugh's light, pleasant tones intervened.

"A legacy, Maria, is not quite the same thing." Mr. Winthrop Fowler's perfect intonation carried its usual implication that the subject was closed.

"——is what I call an adventuress," Miss Fowler summed up. She had a way of ignoring objections, of reappearing beyond them like a submarine with the ultimate and detonating answer. "And now she wants to reopen the matter when the whole thing's over and done with. After three years. Extraordinary taste." She hitched her black-velvet Voltaire arm-chair a little away from the fire and spread a vast knitting-bag of Chinese brocade over her knees. "I suppose she isn't satisfied; she wants more."

"Naturally, I cannot imagine what other reason she could have for insisting on a personal interview," her brother agreed, dryly. He retired into the *Transcript* as a Trappist withdraws into his vows. A chastened client of Mr. Fowler's once observed that a half-hour's encounter with him resulted in a rugful of asphyxiated topics.

Miss Maria, however, preferred disemboweling hers. "I shouldn't have consented," she snapped. "Hugh, if you would be so good as to sit down. You are obstructing the light. And the curtain-cord. If you could refrain from twisting it for a few moments."

Hugh let his long, high-shouldered figure lapse into the window-seat. "And besides, we're all dying to know what she looks like," he suggested.

"Speak for yourself, please," said Miss Fowler, with the vivacity of the lady who protests too much.

"I do, I do! Good Lord! I'm just as bad as the rest of you. All my life I've been consumed to know what Uncle Hugh could have seen in a perfectly obscure little person to make him do what he did. There must have been something." His eyes travelled to a sketch in pencil of a man's head which hung in the shadow of the chimney-piece, a sketch whose uncanny suggestion might have come from the quality of the sitter or merely from a smudging of the medium. "Everything he did always seemed to me perfectly natural," he went on, as though conscious of new discovery. "Even those years when he was knocking about the world, hiding his address. Even when he had that fancy that people were persecuting him. Most people did worry him horribly."

A glance flashed between the two middle-aged listeners. It was a peculiar glance, full of a half-denied portent. Then Miss Fowler's fingers, true to their traditions, loosened their grip on her needles and casually smoothed out her work.

"I have asked you not to speak of that," she mentioned, quietly.

"I know. But of course there was no doubt at all that he was sa—was entirely recovered before his death. Don't you think so, sir?"

His uncle laid down the paper and fixed the young man with the gray, unsheathed keenness that had sent so many witnesses grovelling to the naked truth. "No doubt whatever. I always held, and so did both the physicians, that his lack of balance was a temporary and sporadic thing, brought on by overwork and—and certain unhappy conditions of his life. There has never been any such taint in our branch of the family."

"No-o, so they say," Hugh agreed. "One of our forebears did see ghosts, but that was rather the fashion. And his father, that old Johnnie over the fireplace—you take after him, Aunt Maria—he was the prize witch-

smeller of his generation, and he condemned all the young and pretty ones. That hardly seems well-balanced."

"Collaterals on the distaff side," Mr. Fowler put in hastily. "If you would read Mendel——"

"Mendel? I have read about him." He raised the forefinger of his right hand. "Very suggestive. If your father was a black rabbit"—he raised the forefinger of his left—"and your mother was a white rabbit, then your male children would be"—he raised all the other fingers and paused as though taken aback by the size of the family—"would be blue guinea-pigs, with a tendency to club-foot and astigmatism, but your female children might only be rather clumsy tangoists with a weakness for cutting their poor relations. That's all I remember, but I *do* know that because I studied the charts."

"Very amusing," said Mr. Fowler, indulgently.

Hugh flushed.

"I am sure it can't be that way." Miss Maria flapped her knitting over. "But everything has changed since my day, and *not* for the better. The curtain-cord."

"Beg pardon," muttered Hugh. His mind went on churning nonsense. "There are two days it is useless to flee from—the day of your death and the day when your family doesn't care for your jokes.

"For a joke is an intellectual thing,
And a *mot* is the sword of an angel king.

"Good old Blake. Why do the best people always see jokes? Why does a really good one make a whole frozen crowd feel jolly and united all of a sudden?" He pondered on the beneficence of the comic spirit. Hugh was a born Deist. It gave him no trouble at all to believe that since the paintings of Velasquez and the great outdoors, which he had seen, were beautiful, so much the more beautiful must be that God whom he had not seen. It seemed reasonable. As for the horrors like Uncle Hugh's affair—well, they must be put in for *chiaroscuro*. A thing couldn't be all white without being blank. The

thought of the shadows, however, always made him profoundly uncomfortable, and his instinct right-about-faced to the lighter surface of life. "Anyhow," he broke silence, "the daughter of Heth must be game. Three to one, and on our native heath."

He looked appraisingly about the room, pausing at the stiff, distinguished, grey-haired couple, one on either side of the fire. The effect was of a highly finished genre picture: the rich wainscot between low bookshelves, the brooding portraits, the black-blue rug bordered by a veiled Oriental motive, the black-velvet cushions that brought out the watery reflections of old Sheraton as even the ancient horsehair had not done; the silver candlesticks, the miniatures, and on the mantel those two royal flower-pots whose precarious existence was to his aunt a very fearful joy. Even the tortoiseshell cat, sprawled between the two figures like a tiny tiger-skin, was in the picture. It was a room that gently put you into your place. Hugh recalled with a faint grin certain meetings here of philanthropic ladies whose paths had seldom turned into the interiors of older Beacon Street. The state of life to which it had pleased their Maker to call them, he reflected, would express itself preferably in gilding and vast pale-tinted upholstery and pink bibelots—oh, quite a lot of pink. This place had worried them into a condition of disconcerted awe.

He tried to fancy what it was going to do to the unbidden, resented guest. A queer protest against its enmity, an impulse to give her a square deal, surged up in him from nowhere. After all, whatever else she might be, she was Uncle Hugh's girl. Like all the world, Hugh loved the dispossessed lover. He knew what it felt like. One does not reach the mature age of twenty-four without having at least begun the passionate pilgrimage. His few tindery and tinselly affairs he uneasily suspected of following the obvious formula: three parts curiosity, three parts the literary sense, three parts crude young impulse, one part distilled moonshine. The real love of his life had been Uncle Hugh.

He sprang up with an abruptness to which his elders seemed to be used. He stopped before a brass-trimmed

desk and jerked at the second drawer. "Where are those letters, sir?"

"You mean——"

"Yes, the one you wrote her about the money, and her answer. You put them with his papers, didn't you? Where's the key?"

The older man drew from his waistcoat pocket a carved bit of brass. "What do you want with them?" he asked, cautiously.

"I want to refresh my memory—and Aunt Maria's." He took out a neat little pile of papers and began to sort them intently. "Here they are on top." He laid out a docketed envelope on the desk. "And here are the essays and poems that you wouldn't publish. I considered them the best things he ever did."

"You were not his literary executor," said his uncle, coldly. Another stifled glance passed between the seniors, but this time Miss Maria made no effort to restore the gloss of the surface. She sat idle, staring at the papers with a sort of horror.

"Put them back," she said. "Winthrop, I do think you might burn them. If you keep things like that too long the wrong people are sure to get them."

"Wait a bit. I haven't seen them for years, not since you published the collected works—with Hamlet left out." The young man lifted a worn brown-morocco portfolio tied with a frazzled red ribbon. "And here"—his voice dropped—"here is It—the letters he wrote to her and never sent. It was a sort of diary, wasn't it, going on for years? What a howling pity we couldn't print that!"

"Hugh!"

"Don't faint, Aunt Maria. You wouldn't catch me doing anything so indecent. But suppose Dante's dear family had suppressed the *Vita Nuova*. And it ought to be one of the most extraordinary human documents in the world, perfectly intimate, all the bars down, full of those flashes of his. Just the man, *ipsissimus*, that never happened but that once. Uncle Winthrop, don't you think that I might read it?"

"Do you think so? I never did."

"Oh, if you put it up to me like that! Of course I

can't. But what luck that he didn't ask you to send it to her—supposing she's the wrong kind—wasn't it . . .” His voice trailed off, leaving his lips foolishly open. “You don't mean—he did?”

“Yes, at the end, after you had left the room,” said Mr. Fowler, firmly.

“And you—didn't? Why not?”

“As you said, for fear she was the wrong kind.”

“It was too much to hope that she would be anything else,” his aunt broke in, harshly. “Shut your mouth, Hugh; you look like a fool. Think what she might have done with them—she and some of those unspeakable papers.”

“Oh, I see! I see!” groaned the young man. “But how awful not to do the very last thing he wanted! Did you ever try to find out what kind of a person she was?”

“She took the money. That was enough,” cried Miss Fowler. “She got her share, just as though she had been his legal wife.”

Hugh gave her a dazed look. “You don't mean that she was his illegal one? I never——”

“Oh no, no!” Mr. Fowler interposed. “We have no reason to think that she was otherwise than respectable. Maria, you allow most unfortunate implications to result from your choice of words. We know very little, really.”

“He met her in Paris when he gave that course of lectures over there. We know that much. And she was an American student—from Virginia, wasn't it? But that was over twenty years ago. Didn't he see her after that?”

“I am sure he did not.”

“She wasn't with him when he was knocking about Europe?”

“Certainly not. She came home that very year and married. As her letter states, she was a widow with three children at the time of his death.”

“I have always considered it providential that he didn't know she was a widow,” observed Miss Maria, primly.

Her nephew shot her a look that admitted his intermittent amusement in his aunt Maria, but definitely gave

her up. He carefully leaned the portfolio inside the arm of the sofa that neighboured the desk, and picked up the long envelope.

"A copy of my letter," said Mr. Fowler.

To his sister, watching him as he watched Hugh, came the unaccountable impression that his sure and chiselled surface covered a nervous anxiety. Then Miss Maria, being a product of the same school, dismissed the idea as absurd.

Hugh raised bewildered eyes from the letters. "I can't exactly remember," he said. "I was so cut up at the time. Did I ever actually read this before or was I merely told about it? I went back for Midyear's, you know, almost at once. I know my consent was asked, but——"

"You—did not see it."

"And you, Aunt Maria, of course you knew about it!"

"Certainly," said Miss Fowler, on the defensive. "As usual in business matters, your uncle decided for me. We have been accustomed to act as a family always. To me the solidarity of the family is more than the interest of any member of it."

"Oh, I know that the Fowler family is the noblest work of God." The young man looked from one to the other as he might have regarded two strangers whose motives it was his intention to find out. "I've been brought up on that. But what I want to know now is the whyness of this letter."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Fowler's voice cut the pause like a trowel executing the middle justice on an earthworm.

"Why—why——" Hugh began, desperately. "I mean, why wasn't the money turned over to her at once—all of it?"

"It is customary to notify legatees."

"And she wasn't even a legatee," added Miss Maria, grimly. "He never made a will."

"No," said Hugh, with an ugly laugh, "he merely trusted to our promises."

There was a brief but violent silence.

"I think, Winthrop," Miss Maria broke it, "that, instead of questioning the propriety of my language, you might do well to consider your nephew's."

Hugh half-tendered the letter. "You're so confoundedly clever. Uncle Winthrop. You—you just put the whole thing up to the poor woman. I can't pick out a word to show where you said it, but the tone of your letter is exactly this, 'Here's the money for you, and if you take it you're doing an unheard-of thing.' *She* saw it right enough. Her answer is just defence of why she has to take it—some of it. She's a mother with three children, struggling to keep above water. She's a human animal fighting for her young. So she takes, most apologetically, most unhappily, a part of what he left her, and she hates to take that. It's the most pitiful thing——"

"Piteous," corrected Miss Maria, in a tone like a bite.

Mr. Fowler laid the tips of his fingers very delicately on his nephew's knee. "Will you show me the place or places where I make these very damaging observations?"

"That's just it. I can't pick them out, but——"

"I am sure that you cannot, because they exist only in your somewhat—shall we say, lyrical imagination? I laid the circumstances before the woman and she acted as she saw fit to act. Hugh, my dear boy, I wish that you would try to restrain your—your growing tendency to excitability. I know that this is a trying day for all of us."

"O Lord, yes! It brings it all back," said Hugh, miserably. "I'm sorry if I said anything offensive, sir, but——" He gave it up. "You know I have a devil, sometimes." He gave a half-embarrassed laugh.

"Offensive—if you have said anything offensive?" Miss Fowler boiled over. "Is that all you are going to say, Winthrop? If so——"

Mr. Fowler lifted a warning hand. The house door was opening. Then the discreet steps of Gannett came up the hall, followed by something lighter and more resilient.

"At least don't give me away to the lady the very

first thing," said Hugh, lightly. He shoved the papers into the drawer and swung it shut. His heart was beating quite ridiculously. He would know at last—— What wouldn't he know? "Uncle Hugh's girl, Uncle Hugh's girl," he told himself, and his temperamental responsiveness to the interest and the mystery of life expanded like a sea-anemone in the Gulf Stream.

Gannett opened the door, announced in his impeccable English, "Mrs. Shirley," and was not.

A very small, very graceful woman hesitated in the doorway. Hugh's first impression was surprise that there was so little of her. Then his always alert subconsciousness registered:

"A lady, yes, but a country lady; not *de par le monde*. Pleasantly rather than well dressed; those veils are out." He had met her at once with outstretched hand and the most cordial, "I am glad to see you, Mrs. Shirley." Then he mentioned the names of his aunt and uncle. He did not dare to leave anything to Aunt Maria.

That lady made a movement that might or might not have been a gesture of recognition. Mr. Fowler, who had risen, inclined his handsome head with a polite murmur and indicated a chair which faced the light. Mrs. Shirley sat, instead, upon the edge of the sofa, which happened to be nearer. With her coming Hugh's expansiveness had suffered a sudden rebuff. A feeling of dismal conventionality permeated the room like a fog. He plumbed it in vain for the wonder and the magic that ought to have been the inescapable aura of Uncle Hugh's girl. Was this the mighty ocean, was this all? She was a little nervous, too. That was a pity. Nervousness in social relations was one of the numerous things that Aunt Maria never forgave.

Then the stranger spoke, and Hugh's friendliness went out to the sound as to something familiar for which he had been waiting.

"It is very good of you to let me come," she said.

"But she must be over forty," Hugh told himself, "and her voice is young. So was his always." It was also very natural and moving and not untinged by what

Miss Fowler called the Southern patois. "And her feet are young."

Mr. Fowler uttered another polite murmur. There was no help from that quarter. She made another start.

"It seemed to me——" she addressed Miss Fowler, who looked obdurate. She cast a helpless glance at the cat, who opened surprising topaz eyes and looked supercilious. Then she turned to Hugh. "It seemed to me," she said, steadily, "that I could make you understand—I mean I could express myself more clearly if I could see you, than I could by writing, but—it is rather difficult."

The overheated, inclement room waited. Hugh restrained his foot from twitching. Why didn't Aunt Maria say something? She was behaving abominably. She was still seething with her suppressed outburst like a tea-kettle under the cozy of civilization. And it was catching.

"I explained at the time, three years ago," Mrs. Shirley made the plunge, "why I took the—money at all." The hard word was out, and Hugh relaxed. "I don't know what you thought of me, but at the time it seemed like the mercy of Heaven. I had to educate the children. We were horribly poor. I was almost in despair. And I felt that if I could take it from any one I could take it from him . . ."

"Yes," said Hugh, unhappily. The depression that dropped on him at intervals seemed waiting to pounce. He glanced at his uncle's judicial mask, knowing utterly the distaste for sentimental encounters that it covered. He detested his aunt's aloofness. He was almost angry with this little woman's ingenuousness that put her so candidly at their cynical mercy.

"But now," she went on, "some land we have that seemed worth nothing at the time has become very valuable. The town grew out in that direction. And my eldest boy is doing very well indeed, and my daughter is studying for a library position."

"The short and simple annals of the poor," sighed Hugh to Hugh.

"And so," said little Mrs. Shirley, with astounding

simplicity, "I came to ask you please to take it back again." She gave an involuntary sigh of relief, as though she had returned a rather valuable umbrella. Mr. Fowler's eyeglasses dropped from his nose as his eyebrows shot up.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Miss Maria with all the unexpectedness of Galatea. "You don't really mean it?" Her bag slid to the floor and the cat became thoroughly intrigued.

"Do I understand you to say"—Mr. Fowler's voice was almost stirred—"that you wish to return my brother's legacy to the family?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Shirley, "only, it wasn't a legacy. It was merely kindness that let me have it. You never can know how kind it was. But we can get on without it now."

Mr. Fowler cleared his throat. To Hugh his manner faintly suggested the cat busy with the yarn, full of a sort of devout curiosity. "Pardon me," he said, gently, "but are you sure—have you given this matter sufficient thought? The sum is a considerable one. Your children——"

"I have talked it over with them. They feel just as I do."

"A very proper feeling," said Miss Fowler, approvingly. "I must say that I never expected it. I shall add part of my share of it to the Marian Fowler Ward in the Home for Deficient Children. A most worthy charity. Perhaps I could interest you——"

"Oh, that would be lovely!" cried Mrs. Shirley. "Anything for children. . . . I've already spoken to my cousin, who is a lawyer, about transferring the securities back to you."

"I shall communicate with him at once," said Mr. Fowler. His court-room manner had burgeoned into his best drawing-room blend of faintly implied gallantry and deep consideration. One almost caught Winter getting out of the lap of Spring. Then the three heads which had unconsciously leaned together suddenly straightened up and turned in the same direction.

Hugh stood almost over them. In one hand he held

his aunt's knitting, which he had mechanically rescued from the cat. Now he drew out one of the ivory needles and snapped it into accurate halves. "This is atrocious!" he said, with care and precision. His voice shook. "I shall not touch a cent of it and"—he embraced his uncle and aunt in the same devastating look—"neither will you if you have any sense of decency."

"I think——"

"It doesn't matter remotely what you—we think, sir. What matters is what Uncle Hugh thought." He turned to Mrs. Shirley with an extraordinary softening of tone. "Couldn't you keep it? When he died . . . in the room over this"—with a little gasp her glance flew to the ceiling as though this topographical detail had brought her a sharp realization of that long-past scene—"he made us promise that you should have it, all of it. He felt that you needed it; he worried about it."

"Oh, how kind of him—how kind!" cried the little woman. The poignancy of her voice cut into his disappointment like a sharp ray of light. "Even then—to think of me. But don't you understand that he wouldn't want me to—to take anything that I felt I ought not to take?"

"That's the way out," rippled across Mr. Fowler's face. He was experiencing a variety of mental disturbances, but this came to the surface just in time for Hugh to catch it.

"Oh, well," he murmured, wearily. "Only, none for this deficient child, thank you." He walked to the window and stood looking out into the blown spring green of the elm opposite. His ebbd anger had left a residuum of stubbornness. There was still an act of justice to be consummated and the position of grand-justicer offered a certain righteous attraction. As he reminded himself, if you put your will to work on a difficult action you were fain to commit, after a while the will worked automatically and your mind functioned without aid from you, and the action bloomed of itself. This kinetic process was a constant device of the freakish impulse that he called his devil. He deliberately laid the train.

"There is one more thing," the alien was saying. Her

voice had gained a wonderful fluency amid the general thaw. "I didn't dare to ask before, but if he thought of me then—— I have always hoped he left some message for me . . . a letter, perhaps."

Hugh smiled agreeably. "In just a moment," he considered, "I am going to do something so outrageous that I can't even imagine how my dear families are going to take it." He was about to hurt them severely, but that was all right. His uncle was a tempered weapon of war that despised quarter; and as for Aunt Maria, he rather wanted to hurt Aunt Maria for her own good.

Into the eloquent and mendacious silence that was a gift of their caste the voice fell humbly: "So there wasn't? I suppose I oughtn't to have expected it."

"Any time now, Gridley," Hugh signalled to his familiar. Like a response, a thin breeze tickled the roots of his hair. He swung around with the pivot of a definite purpose. With an economy of movement that would have contented an efficiency expert he set a straight fiddle-backed chair squarely in front of Uncle Hugh's girl and settled himself in it with his back to his own people.

"Mrs. Shirley," he began, quietly, "will you talk to me, please? I hope I shan't startle you, but there are things I absolutely have to know, and this is my one chance. I am entirely determined not to let it slip. Talk to me, please, not to them. As you have doubtless noticed, though excellent people where the things not flatly of this world are concerned, my uncle is a graven image and my aunt is a deaf mute. As for me, I am just unbalanced enough to understand anything." He was aware of the rustle of consternation behind him and hurried on, ignoring that and whatever else might be happening there. "That's what I'm banking on now. I intend to say my say and they are going to allow it, because it is dangerous to thwart queer people—very dangerous indeed. You know, they thwarted Uncle Hugh in every possible way. My grandfather was a composite of those two, and all of them adored my uncle and contradicted him and watched him until he went over the border. And they're so dead scared that I'm

going to follow him some day that they let me do quite as I please." He passed his hand across his eyes as though brushing away cobwebs. "Will you be so good as to put your veil up."

"Why—why, certainly!" Mrs. Shirley faltered. She uncovered her face and Hugh nodded to the witness within.

"Yes, he'd have liked that," he told himself. "Lots of expression and those beautiful haunted shadows about the eyes." He laughed gently. "Don't look so frightened. I don't bite. Just humour me, as Uncle Winthrop is signalling you to do. You understand, don't you, that Uncle Hugh was the romance and the adventure of my life? I'm still saturated with him, but there was lots of him that I could never get through to. There never was a creature better worth knowing, and he couldn't show me, or else I had blind spots. There were vast tracts of undiscovered country in him, as far as I was concerned—lands of wonder, east of the sun and west of the moon—that sort of thing. But I knew that there was a certain woman who must have been there, who held the heart of the mystery, and to-day, when this incredible chance came—when you came—I made up my mind that I was not going to be restrained nor baffled by the customs of my tribe. I want the truth and I'm prepared to give it. From the shoulder. If you will tell me everything you know about him I promise to tell you everything I know. You'll want to——" The sound of the closing door made him turn. The room behind him was empty. His manner quieted instantly. "That's uncommonly tactful of them. . . . You won't think that they meant any discourtesy by leaving?" he added, anxiously. "They wouldn't do that."

"Oh, I'm sure not! Your uncle made me understand," faltered Mrs. Shirley. "They knew you could speak more freely without them."

"He's wonderful with the wireless," Hugh agreed. "But they were in terror, anyway, as to how freely I was about to speak before them. They can't stand this. Everything really human seems pretty well alien to Uncle

Winthrop. He's exhibit A of the people who consider civilization a mistake. And my aunt Maria is a truly good woman—charities and all that—but if you put a rabbit in her brain it would incontinently curl up and die in convulsions."

She laughed helplessly, and Hugh reported an advance.

"Nevertheless," he added quaintly, "we don't really dislike each other."

"They love you above everything."

"I'm the last of the family, you see; I'm the future. . . . Can't we skip the preliminaries?" he broke out. "You don't feel that I am a stranger, do you?" He halted on the verge of the confidence that he found no barrier in her advanced age. He knew plenty of women of forty who had never grown up much and who met him on perfectly equal terms. This, however, was a case by itself. He plunged back into the memories of Uncle Hugh. He spoke of his charm, his outlook on life, sometimes curiously veiled, often uncannily clairvoyant; his periods of restless suffering tending to queer, unsocial impulses; then the flowering of an interval of hard work and its reward of almost supernatural joy.

"He used to go around in a rainbow," said Hugh, "a sort of holy soap bubble. I hardly dared to speak to him for fear of breaking it. It came with a new inspiration, and while it lasted nothing on earth was so important. Then when it was finished he never wanted to see the thing again."

"Go on," said his listener. Her grey eyes plumbed his with a child's directness. He was conscious of his will playing on her. He was keeping his part of the contract, but he was also breaking the way for hers. He must not let them go for a moment, those grey eyes like a girl's that grew absent-minded so easily. Only a little more and his mood would curve around both them, a glamorous mist of feeling.

"You go on," he murmured. "Can't you see how much I want you to? Can't you feel how much I'm the right person to know?"

"I could never tell any one. You want——"

"Anything, everything. You must have known him better than anybody in the world did."

"I think so," she said, slowly. "And I saw him alone only twice in my life."

For some time he had sat with his long fingers over his mouth, afraid of checking her by an untimely word.

"Of course I was in his classes. You know he had an extraordinary success; he struck twelve at once, as they say there. The French really discovered him as a poet, just as Mallarmé discovered Poe; some of them used that parallel. And the girls—he was a *matinée* idol and a cult—even the French girls. We went into that classroom thrilling as we never went to any ball. I worked that winter for him harder than I had ever worked in my life, and about Easter he began to single me out for the most merciless fault-finding. That was his way of showing that he considered you worth while. He had a habit of standing over you in class, holding your paper like a knout. And once or twice—I called myself a conceited little idiot—but once or twice——"

Hugh nodded. His pulses were singing like morning stars at the spectacle of a new world.

"He used to say of a certain excited, happy feeling, a sort of fey feeling, that you seemed to have swallowed a heavenly pigeon. And—well, he looked like that. But I knocked my vanity on the head and told it, 'Down to the other dogs.' I was used to young men; I knew how little such manifestations could mean. But after that I used to set little lines in the things I wrote for him, very delicately, and sometimes I fancied I had caught a fish. It was most exciting."

Hugh again impersonated a Chinese mandarin.

"You see, he allowed so few people to know him, he moved with such difficulty in that formally laid-out, small, professional world, with its endless leaving of cards and showing yourself on the proper days. I think they considered him a sort of Huron afflicted with genius, and forgave him. He ran away from them, he fought them off. And to feel that there was a magic spider-web between this creature and me, new every day and

invisible to everybody else and dripping with poetry like dewdrops! Can't you fancy the intoxication? I was nineteen. . . . I had engaged myself to be married to Beverly Shirley. I had known him all my life—before I left home—but I had absolutely no conviction of disloyalty. This was different; this was another life."

"Another you," agreed Hugh, as one who took exotic states of mind for granted.

"Well, yes. . . . It was one of those awful at-homes of Madame Normand's. She took American girls *en pension*, and she was supposed to look after us severely; but as she was an American herself, of course she gave us a great deal of liberty. She was the wife of a *professeur*, and she had rather an imposing *salon*, so she received just so often, and you had to go or she never stopped asking you why. You have been to those French receptions?"

"Where they serve music and syrup and little hard cakes, and you carry away the impression of a lordly function because of the scenery and the manners? Indeed yes!"

"I slid away after a while, out upon the iron balcony, filled with new lilacs, that overhung the garden. Something had hurt my little feelings; a letter hadn't come, perhaps. I remember how dark and warm the night was, like a gulf under me, and the stars and the lights of Paris seemed very much alike and rather disappointing. Then I heard his voice behind me, and I was as overwhelmed as—as Daphne or Danaë or one of those pagan ladies might have been when the god came.

"He said, 'What are you doing, hanging over this dark, romantic chasm?' And I just had presence of mind enough to play up.

"'Naturally, I'm waiting for a phantom lover.' Then the answer to that flashed on me and I said in a hurry, 'I thought you never came to these things.'

"'I came to see you'—he really said it—and then, 'And—am I sufficiently demoniacal?' And he *had* swallowed a pigeon.

"'Oh dear, no!' said I. 'You are much too respectable. You are from Boston.'

“‘And you from Virginia,’ said he. ‘I hear that a certain Stewart once unjustifiably claimed kinship with your branch of the family and has since been known as the Pretender.’

“‘That is quite true,’ said I. ‘And I hear that once when the Ark ran aground a little voice was heard piping: ‘Save me! save me! I am a Fowler of Eos-ton!’

“That was the silly way we began. Isn’t it incredible?”

“He could be silly—that was one of the lovable things,” Hugh mused. “And he could say the most nakedly natural things. But he generally used the mandarin dialect. He thought in it, I suppose.”

“No,” the stranger corrected him. “He thought in thoughts. Brilliant people always do. The words just wait like a—a——”

“Layette,” said Hugh. “What else did he say?”

“The next I remember we were leaning together, all but touching. And he was telling me about the little green gate.”

Hugh’s hand shut. “He always called it that. Was he thinking of it even then?”

“Oh yes!”

“He never was like a person of this world,” said Hugh, under his breath.

“The loneliest creature I ever knew.”

They fell silent, like two old friends whose sorrow is the same.

“He believed,” Hugh went on, after a moment, “that when life became intolerable you had a perfect right to take the shortest way out. And he thought of it as a little green gate, swinging with its shadow in the twilight, so that a touch would let you into the sweetest, dimmest old garden.”

“But he loved life.”

“Sometimes. The colour of it and the unexpectedness. He believed the world didn’t have any definite plan, but just wandered along the road and picked up adventures. And he loved that. He said God made a new earth every day and he rather fancied a new heaven

oftener. But he got so dead tired at the end, homesick for underground. . . . I wonder . . ."

The little woman was looking past him, straight into an evocation of a vanished presence that was so real, so nearly tangible, that Hugh was forced to lay violent hands upon his absurd impulse to glance over his shoulder. "I wouldn't let him," she said, in a tone the young man had never heard before.

"You mean . . ."

"I couldn't bear it. I made him promise me that he wouldn't. I can't tell you that. We talked for a long time, and the night was full of doom. He was tired then, but that wasn't all. He felt what was coming—the Shadow . . . and he was in terror. What he dreaded most was that it might change him in some way, make him something beastly and devilish—he who had always loved whatever was lovely and merciful and of good report."

Hugh got up with a shudder. "Hush!" he said, sharply. "It's too ghastly. Don't tell me any more about it." He wandered across the room, pulling a leaf from the azaleas, stopping at the window for a long look out. The wind was blowing some riotous young clouds over the sky like inarticulate shouts. There was an arrogant bird in the elm; there were pert crocus-buds in the window-boxes. The place was full of fool-hardy little dare-devils who trusted their fate and might never find it out. After all, that was the way to live—as long as one was allowed. He turned suddenly with his whimsical smile. "I look out o' window quite a bit," he explained, "well, because of my aunt Maria." When he sat down again in the Sheraton chair Mrs. Shirley shifted her story to the plane of the smile.

"I don't know how late it was when Madame Normand popped her head out of the balcony door."

"'Who was then surprised? It was the lady,' as dear old Brantome says?"

"It was everybody. The company had gone and Mélanie the *bonne* was putting out the candles.

"'Miss Stewart and I have just discovered that we are very nearly related,' said he.

"‘But how delightful,’ said Madame, thoroughly annoyed."

"And the other time," Hugh hinted. What he wanted to say was, "So you prevented it, you kept him here, God bless you!" His natural resilience had asserted itself. Vistas were opening. The Hugh who accepted life for what it was worth was again in the ascendant, but he found a second to call up the other Hugh, whose legal residence was somewhere near the threshold of consciousness, to take notice. He had always known that there must have been something in Uncle Hugh's girl.

"That was a few days later, the afternoon before I left Paris. I went quite suddenly. Somebody was sick at home, and I had the chance to travel with some friends who were going. He had sent me flowers—no, not roses."

"Narcissus?"

"Yes. Old Monsieur Normand was scandalized; it seems one doesn't send yellow flowers to a *jeune fille*. To me it was the most incredibly thoughtful and original thing. All the other girls had gone with Madame to a very special piano recital, in spite of a drizzling rain. It had turned cool, too, I remember, because there was a wood fire in the little sitting-room—not the *salon*, but the girls' room. Being an American, Madame was almost lavish about fires. And it was a most un-French room, the most careless little place, where the second-best piano lived, and the lilacs, when they were taken in out of the cold. There were sweet old curtains, and a long sofa in front of the fireplace instead of the traditional armchairs. Anybody's books and bibelots lay about. I was playing."

"What?" This was important.

"What would a girl play, over twenty years ago, in Paris? In the *crépuscule*, with the lilacs that *embaument*, as they say there, and with a sort of panic in her mind? Because, after all, the man to whom one is engaged is a man whom one knows very slightly."

"Absolutely," said Hugh.

"And I didn't want to leave Paris. . . . Of course I

was playing Chopin bits, with an ache in my heart to match, that I couldn't bear and was enjoying to the utmost. What do girls play now? Then all of us had attacks of Chopin. Madame used to laugh and say, 'I hear the harbour bar still moaning,' and order that particular girl's favourite dessert. She spoiled us. And Monsieur would say something about *si jeunesse savait*. He was a nice old man, not very successful; his colleagues patronized him. Oh yes, he was obvious!

"And then Mélanie opened the door and announced, '*Monsieur, le cousin de Mademoiselle.*' I don't know what made her do it except a general wish to be kind. She remembered from the other night, and, besides, she hated to attempt English names; she made salmi of them."

Hugh had ceased to hold her eyes long ago. They looked into the window's square of light. He had no wish to intrude his presence. She was finding it natural to tell him, just as he had acknowledged her right to explore the intimate places of his soul. Things simply happened that way sometimes, and one was humbly thankful.

"'Go on,' he said. 'Don't stop.' He sat in a corner of the sofa, and for a while the impetus of my start carried me on. Then the bottom dropped out of Chopin. I went over and sat in the other corner. It was a long sofa; it felt as long as the world.

"Do you remember that heart-breakingly beautiful voice of his that could make you feel anything he was feeling? It was like magic. He said at last:

"'So you are going home to be married?'

"I nodded.

"'Betty,' he said, 'are you happy, quite happy, about—everything?'

"'Oh yes!' I said. 'Oh yes, Professor Fowler!' The curious thing about it was that I spoke the truth, when I considered it seriously.

"He said, 'Then that's all right.' Then he laughed a little and said, 'Do you always call me Professor Fowler, even when you shut your door on the world at night and are all alone with God and the silence?'

"And Claudia Jones,' I added, stupidly.

"He considered that seriously and said, 'I didn't know about Claudia Jones; she may inhibit even the silence and the other ingredient. I suppose you call me Teacher.'

"I cried out at that. 'I might call you *cher maitre*, as they do her.'

"He said, 'That may do for the present.'

"We looked into the fire and the lilacs filled the pause as adequately as Chopin could have done. All at once he got up and came over to me—it seemed the most natural thing in the world—across that wilderness of sofa.

"I suppose,' he said, 'that you won't let me off that promise.'

"No, no!' I cried, all my old panic flooding over me again. I threw my hands out, and suddenly he had caught them in his and was holding me half away from him, and he was saying, in that tragic voice of his:

"No, no! But give me something to make it bearable.'"

"Allah, the compassionate!" sighed Hugh, in ecstasy. He had never dared hope for all this. His very being went on tiptoe for fear of breathing too loud.

"We sat there for ages and ages, gazing into the fire, not saying a word. Then he spoke . . . every now and then. He said:

"The horrible thing would have been never to have known you. Now that I've touched you I'm magnetized for life. I can't lose you again.'

"It isn't I,' I told him. 'It's only what you think me.'

"You are the only creature outside of myself that I ever found myself in,' he said. 'And I could look into you like Narcissus until I died. You are home and Nirvana. That's what you are. When I look at you I believe in God. You gallantest, most foolhardy, little, fragile thing, you, you're not afraid of anything. You trust this rotten life, don't you? You expect to find lovely things everywhere, and you will, just because they'll spring up around your feet. You'll save your world like all redeemers simply by being in it.'

"No woman ever had such things said to her as he said to me. But most of the time we said nothing. There wasn't any past or future; there was only the touch of his shoulder and his hands all around mine. It was like coming in out of the cold; it was like being on a hill above the sea, and listening to the wind in the pines until you don't know which is the wind and which is you. . . .

"It couldn't last forever. After a while something like a little point of pain began worrying my mind.

"'But there won't be . . . This is good-bye,' I cried.

"'Don't you believe it,' he said. 'God Himself couldn't make us say good-bye again.' He got up and drew me with him. It was quite dark now except for the fire, and his eyes . . . they were like those of the Djinnns who were made out of elemental fire instead of earth. 'You'll come to me in the blessed sunshine,' he said, 'and in music, and in the best impulses of my own soul. If I were an old-fashioned lover I should promise to wait for you in heaven. . . . Betty, Betty, I have you in heaven now and forever!' . . . I felt his cheek on mine. Then he was gone. That was all; that was every bit of all."

"And he had that to live on for the rest of his life." Hugh broke the silence under his breath. "Well, thank God he had *something!*"

The little woman fumbled in her bag for a handkerchief and shamelessly dried her eyes. As she moved, a brown object fell from the corner of the couch across her lap. Hugh held his hand out for the morocco portfolio.

"It seems to have the homing instinct," he observed; then, abruptly, "Wait a moment; I'm going to call them back." He paused, as usual, before his favourite confidant, the window. "The larger consciousness, the Universal Togetherness," he muttered. "I really believe he must have touched it that once. O Lord! how——" His spacious vocabulary gave it up.

When he followed his uncle and aunt into the room Mrs. Shirley came forward, her thin veil again covering her face.

"I must go," she said. "Thank you once more for letting me come."

With a curious young touch of solemnity Hugh laid the brown case in her hands. "This belongs to you," he said, "and I wanted them to see you receive it."

"And you intend to permit this, Winthrop?"

Miss Fowler turned on her brother. She had suppressed her emotions before the intruder; she had even said some proper things without unduly speeding the parting guest. But if you can't be hateful to your own family, to whom, in the name of the domestic pieties, can you be hateful?

Mr. Fowler swiveled on her the glassy eye of one who does not suffer fools gladly. "I permit anything," he responded, icily, "that will keep that boy . . . sane." He retired anew behind the monastic newspaper and rattled it.

Miss Maria received a sudden chill apprehension that Winthrop was looking much older lately. "But——" she faltered. Then she resolutely returned to the baiting. "I suppose you recall her saying that she has a daughter. Probably," admitted Miss Maria, grudgingly, "an attractive daughter."

"It might be a very good thing," said the world-weary voice, and left her gasping. "Two excellent Virginia families." He faced his sister's appalled expression. "He might do something much more impossible—marry a cheap actress or go into a monastery. His behaviour to-day prepares me for anything. And"—a note of difficulty came into what Hugh had once called his uncle's chiselled voice—"you do not appear to realize, Maria, that what Mrs. Shirley has done is rather a remarkable thing, a thing that you and I, with our undoubted appreciation of the value of money, should probably have felt that we could not afford to do."

Hugh came in blithely, bringing a spring-smelling whiff of outdoors with him. "I got her a taxi," he announced, "and she asked me to come down to their place for Easter. There's a hunting club. Oh, cheer up, Aunt Maria! At least she left the money behind."

"Look at my needle!" cried the long-suffering lady. "*You* did that. I must say, Hugh, I find your conduct most disrespectful."

"All right, I grovel," Hugh agreed, pleasantly. He picked up the cat and rubbed her tenderly the wrong way.

"As for the money, I don't see how her conscience could have allowed her to accept everything. And she married somebody else, too."

"So did Dante's girl. That doesn't seem to make all the difference. Conscience?" Hugh went on, absently. "Conscience? Haven't I heard that word somewhere before? You are the only person I know, Aunt Maria, who has a really good, staunch, weather-proof one, because, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, it altereth not."

"I should hope not, indeed," said Miss Fowler, half mollified.

Hugh smiled sleepily. The cat opened one yellow eye and moved mystified whiskers. She profoundly distrusted this affectionate young admirer. Was she being stroked the wrong way or ruffled the right way?

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright," murmured Hugh. "Puzzle, Kitty: find the Adventuress."

THE KITCHEN GODS

By G. F. ALSOP

From Century Magazine

THE lilies bloomed that day. Out in the courtyard, in their fantastic green-dragonèd pots, one by one the tiny, ethereal petals opened. Dong-Yung went rapturously among them, stooping low to inhale their faint fragrance. The square courtyard, guarded on three sides by the wings of the house, facing the windowless blank wall on the fourth, was mottled with sunlight. Just this side of the wall a black shadow, as straight and opaque as the wall itself, banded the court with darkness; but on the hither side, where the lilies bloomed and Dong-Yung moved among them, lay glittering, yellow sunlight. The little box of a house where the gate-keeper lived made a bulge in the uniform blackness of the wall and its shadow. The two tall poles, with the upturned baskets, the devil-catches, rose like flagstaffs from both sides of the door. A huge china griffon stood at the right of the gate. From beyond the wall came the sounds of early morning—the click of wooden sandals on cobbled streets and the panting cries of the coolies bringing in fresh vegetables or carrying back to the denuded land the refuse of the city. The gate-keeper was awake, brushing out his house with a broom of twigs. He was quite bald, and the top of his head was as tanned and brown as the legs of small summer children.

"Good morning, Honourable One," he called. "It is a good omen. The lilies have opened."

An amah, blue-trouserèd, blue-jacketed, blue-aproned, cluttered across the courtyard with two pails of steaming water.

"Good morning, Honourable One. The water for the great wife is hot and heavy." She dropped her buckets,

the water splashing over in runnels and puddles at her feet, and stooped to smell the lilies. "It is an auspicious day."

From the casement-window in the right balcony a voice called:

"Thou dunce! Here I am waiting already half the day. Quicker! quicker!"

It sounded elderly and querulous, a voice accustomed to be obeyed and to dominate. The great wife's face appeared a moment at the casement. Her eyes swept over the courtyard scene—over the blooming lilies, and Dong-Yung standing among them.

"Behold the small wife, cursed of the gods!" she cried in her high, shrill voice. "Not even a girl can she bear her master. May she eat bitterness all her days!"

The amah shouldered the steaming buckets and splashed across the bare boards of the ancestral hall beyond.

"The great wife is angry," murmured the gate-keeper. "Oh, Honourable One, shall I admit the flower-girl? She has fresh orchids."

Dong-Yung nodded. The flower girl came slowly in under the guarded gateway. She was a country child, with brown cheeks and merry eyes. Her shallow basket was steadied by a ribbon over one shoulder, and caught between an arm and a swaying hip. In the flat, round basket, on green little leaves, lay the wired perfumed orchids.

"How many? It is an auspicious day. See, the lilies have bloomed. One for the hair and two for the buttonholes. They smell sweet as the breath of heaven itself."

Dong-Yung smiled as the flower-girl stuck one of the fragrant, fragile, green-striped orchids in her hair, and hung two others, caught on delicate loops of wire, on the jade studs of her jacket, buttoned on the right shoulder.

"Ah, you are beautiful-come-death!" said the flower-girl. "Great happiness be thine!"

"Even a small wife can be happy at times." Dong-

Yung took out a little woven purse, and paid over two coppers apiece to the flower-girl.

At the gate the girl and the gate-keeper fell a-talking.

"Is the morning rice ready?" called a man's voice from the room behind.

Dong-Yung turned quickly. Her whole face changed. It had been smiling and pleased before at the sight of the faint, white lily-petals and the sunlight on her feet and the fragrance of the orchids in her hair; but now it was lit with an inner radiance.

"My beloved Master!" Dong-Yung made a little instinctive gesture toward the approaching man, which in a second was caught and curbed by Chinese etiquette. Dressed, as she was, in pale-gray satin trousers, loose, and banded at the knee with wide blue stripes, and with a soft jacket to match, she was as beautiful in the eyes of the approaching man as the newly opened lilies. What he was in her eyes it would be hard for any modern woman to grasp: that rapture of adoration, that bliss of worship, has lingered only in rare hearts and rarer spots on the earth's surface.

Foh-Kyung came out slowly through the ancestral hall. The sunlight edged it like a bright border. The doors were wide open, and Dong-Yung saw the decorous rows of square chairs and square tables set rhythmically along the walls, and the covered dais at the head for the guest of honour. Long crimson scrolls, sprawled with gold ideographs, hung from ceiling to floor. A rosewood cabinet, filled with vases, peach bloom, imperial yellow, and turquoise blue, gleamed like a lighted lamp in the shadowy morning light of the room.

Foh-Kyung stooped to smell the lilies.

"They perfume the very air we breathe. Little Jewel, I love our old Chinese ways. I love the custom of the lily-planting and the day the lilies bloom. I love to think the gods smell them in heaven, and are gracious to mortals for their fragrance's sake."

"I am so happy!" Dong-Yung said, poking the toe of her slipper in and out the sunlight. She looked up at the man before her, and saw he was tall and slim and as subtle-featured as the cross-legged bronze Budd-

ha himself. His long, thin hands were hid, crossed and slipped along the wrists within the loose apricot satin sleeves of his brocaded garment. His feet, in their black satin slippers and tight-fitting white muslin socks, were austere and aristocratic. Dong-Yung, when he was absent, loved best to think of him thus, with his hands hidden and his eyes smiling.

"The willow-leaves will bud soon," answered Dong-Yung, glancing over her shoulder at the tapering, yellowing twigs of the ancient tree.

"And the beech-blossoms," continued Foh-Kyung. "'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.'"

"The foreign devil's wisdom," answered Dong-Yung.

"It is greater than ours, Dong-Yung; greater and lovelier. To-day, to-day, I will go to their hall of ceremonial worship and say to their holy priest that I think and believe the Jesus way."

"Oh, most-beloved Master, is it also permitted to women, to a small wife, to believe the Jesus way?"

"I will believe for thee, too, little Lotus Flower in the Pond."

"Tell me, O Teacher of Knowledge—tell me that in my heart and in my mind I may follow a little way whither thou goest in thy heart and in thy mind!"

Foh-Kyung moved out of the shadow of the ancestral hall and stood in the warm sunlight beside Dong-Yung, his small wife. His hands were still withheld and hidden, clasping his wrists within the wide, loose apricot sleeves of his gown, but his eyes looked as if they touched her. Dong-Yung hid her happiness even as the flowers hide theirs, within silent, incurving petals.

"The water is cold as the chill of death. Go, bring me hot water—water hot enough to scald an egg."

Foh-Kyung and Dong-Yung turned to the casement in the upper right-hand wing and listened apprehensively. The quick chatter of angry voices rushed out into the sunlight.

"The honourable great wife is very cross this morning." Dong-Yung shivered and turned back to the lilies. "To-day perhaps she will beat me again. Would that

at least I had borne my lord a young prince for a son; then perhaps——”

“Go not near her, little Jewel. Stay in thine own rooms. Nay, I have sons a-plenty. Do not regret the childlessness. I would not have your body go down one foot into the grave for a child. I love thee for thyself.”

“Now my lord speaks truly, as do the foreign devils to the shameless, open-faced women. I like the ways of the outside kingdom well. Tell me more of them, my Master.”

Foh-Kyung moved his hands as if he would have withdrawn them from his apricot-coloured sleeves. Dong-Yung saw the withheld motion, and swayed nearer. For a moment Dong-Yung saw the look in his eyes that engulfed her in happiness; then it was gone, and he looked away past her, across the opening lily-buds and the black rampart of the wall, at something distant, yet precious. Foh-Kyung moved closer. His face changed. His eyes held that hidden rapture that only Dong-Yung and the foreign-born priest had seen.

“Little Jewel, wilt thou go with me to the priest of the foreign-born faith? Come!” He withdrew his hand from his sleeve and touched Dong-Yung on the shoulder. “Come, we will go hand in hand, thou and I, even as the men and women of the Jesus thinking; not as Chinese, I before, and thou six paces behind. Their God loves men and women alike.”

“Is it permitted to a small wife to worship the foreign-born God?” Dong-Yung lifted her eyes to the face of Foh-Kyung. “Teach me, O my Lord Master! My understanding is but young and fearful——”

Foh-Kyung moved into the sunlight beside her.

“Their God loves all the world. Their God is different, little Flower, from the painted images, full of blessings, not curses. He loves even little girl babies that mothers would throw away. Truly his heart is still more loving than the heart of a mother.”

“And yet I am fearful——” Dong-Yung looked back into the shadows of the guest-hall, where the ancestral tablets glowed upon the wall, and crimson tapers

stood ready before them. "Our gods I have touched and handled."

"Nay, in the Jesus way there is no fear left." Foh-Kyung's voice dropped lower. Its sound filled Dong-Yong with longing. "When the wind screams in the chimneys at night, it is but the wind, not evil spirits. When the summer breeze blows in at the open door, we need not bar it. It is but the summer breeze from the rice-fields, uninhabited by witch-ghosts. When we eat our morning rice, we are compelled to make no offering to the kitchen gods in the stove corner. They cannot curse our food. Ah, in the Jesus way there is no more fear!"

Dong-Yung drew away from her lord and master and looked at him anxiously. He was not seeing her at all. His eyes looked beyond, across the fragile, lily-petals, through the solid black wall, at a vision he saw in the world. Dong-Yung bent her head to sniff the familiar sweet springtime orchid hanging from the jade stud on her shoulder.

"Your words are words of good hearing, O beloved Teacher. Nevertheless, let me follow six paces behind. I am not worthy to touch your hand. Six paces behind, when the sun shines in your face, my feet walk in the shadow of your garments."

Foh-Kyung gathered his gaze back from his visions and looked at his small wife, standing in a pool of sunshine before him. Overhead the lazy crows flew by, winging out from their city roosts to the rice-fields for the day's food.

"Tea-boiled eggs!" cried a vender from beyond the wall. A man stopped at the gate, put down his shoulder-tray of food, and bargained with the ancient, mahogany-scalped gate-keeper. Faint odours of food frying in oil stole out from the depths of the house behind him. And Dong-Yung, very quiet and passive in the pose of her body, gazed up at Foh-Kyung with those strange, secretive, ardent eyes. All around him was China, its very essence and sound and smell. Dong-Yung was a part of it all; nay, she was even the very heart of it, swaying there in the yellow light among the lily-petals.

"Precious Jewel! Yet it is sweeter to walk side by side, our feet stepping out into the sunlight together, and our shadows mingling behind. I want you beside me."

The last words rang with sudden warmth. Dong-Yung trembled and crimsoned. It was not seemly that a man speak to a woman thus, even though that man was a husband and the woman his wife, not even though the words were said in an open court, where the eyes of the great wife might spy and listen. And yet Dong-Yung thrilled to those words.

An amah called, "The morning rice is ready."

Dong-Yung hurried into the open room, where the light was still faint, filtering in through a high-silled window and the door. A round, brown table stood in the center of the room. In the corner of the room behind stood the crescentic, white plaster stove, with its dull wooden kettle-lids and its crackling straw. Two cooks, country women, sat in the hidden corner behind the stove, and poked in the great bales of straw and gossiped. Their voices and the answers of the serving amah filled the kitchen with noise. In their decorous niche at the upper right hand of the stove sat the two kitchen gods, small ancient idols, with hidden hands and crossed feet, gazing out upon a continually hungry world. Since time was they had sat there, ensconced at the very root of life, seemingly placid and unseeing and unhearing, yet venomously watching to be placated with food. Opposite the stove, on the white wall, hung a row of brass hooks, from which dangled porcelain spoons with pierced handles. On a serving-table stood the piled bowls for the day, blue-and-white rice patterns, of a thin, translucent ware, showing the delicate light through the rice seeds; red-and-green dragoned bowls for the puddings; and tiny saucer-like platters for the vegetables. The tea-cups, saucered and lidded, but unhandled, stood in a row before the polished brass hot-water kettle.

The whole room was full of a stirring, wakening life, of the crackling straw fire, of the steaming rice, all white and separate-kerneled in its great, shallow, black

iron kettles, lidded with those heavy hand-made wooden lids, while the boiling tea water hissed, and spat out a snake of white steam.

With that curious democracy of China, where high and low alike are friendly, Dong-Yung hurried into her beloved kitchen.

"Has the master come?" asked the serving maid.

"Coming, coming," Dong-Yung answered, "I myself will take in his morning rice, after I have offered the morning oblations to the gods."

Dong-Yung selected two of the daintiest blue-and-white rice-pattern bowls. The cook lifted off the wooden lid of the rice-kettle, and Dong-Yung scooped up a dipperful of the snow-white kernels. On the tiny shelf before each god, the father and mother god of the household, Dong-Yung placed her offering. She stood off a moment, surveying them in pleased satisfaction—the round, blue bowls, with the faint tracery of light; the complacent gods above, red and green and crimson, so age-long, comfortably ensconced in their warm stove corner. She made swift obeisance with her hands and body before those ancient idols. A slant of sunshine swept in from the high windows and fell over her in a shaft of light. The thoughts of her heart were all warm and mixed and confused. She was happy. She loved her kitchen, her gods, all the familiar ways of Chinese life. She loved her silken, satin clothes, perfumed and embroidered and orchid-crowned, yet most of all she loved her lord and master. Perhaps it was this love for him that made all the rest of life so precious, that made each bowl of white rice an oblation, each daily act a glorification. So she flung out her arms and bent her head before the kitchen gods, the symbol of her ancient happiness.

"Dong-Yung, I do not wish you to do this any more."

Dong-Yung turned, her obeisance half arrested in mid-air. Foh-Kyung stood in the doorway.

"My lord," stammered Dong-Yung, "I did not understand your meaning."

"I know that, little Flower in my House. The new meaning is hard to understand. I, too, am but a blind

child unused to the touch of the road. But the kitchen gods matter no more; we pray to a spirit."

Foh-Kyung, in his long apricot-coloured garment, crossed the threshold of the kitchen, crossed the shadow and sunlight that stripped the bare board floor, and stood before the kitchen gods. His eyes were on a level with theirs, strange, painted wooden eyes that stared forth inscrutably into the eating centuries. Dong-Yung stood half bowed, breathless with a quick, cold fear. The cook, one hand holding a shiny brown dipper, the other a porcelain dish, stood motionless at the wooden table under the window. From behind the stove peeped the frightened face of one of the fire-tenders. The whole room was turned to stone, motionless, expectant, awaiting the releasing moment of arousal—all, that is, but the creeping sunshine, sliding nearer and nearer the crossed feet of the kitchen gods; and the hissing steam fire, warming, coddling the hearts of the gods. Sun at their feet, fire at their hearts, food before them, and mortals turned to stone!

Foh-Kyung laughed softly, standing there, eye-level with the kitchen gods. He stretched out his two hands, and caught a god in each. A shudder ran through the motionless room.

"It is wickedness!" The porcelain dish fell from the hand of the cook, and a thousand rice-kernels, like scattered pearls, ran over the floor.

"A blasphemer," the fire-tender whispered, peering around the stove with terrified eyes. "This household will bite off great bitterness."

Foh-Kyung walked around the corner of the stove. The fire sparked and hissed. The sunshine filled the empty niche. Not since the building of the house and the planting of the tall black cypress-trees around it, a hundred years ago, had the sunlight touched the wall behind the kitchen gods.

Dong-Yung sprang into life. She caught Foh-Kyung's sleeve.

"O my Lord and Master, I pray you, do not utterly cast them away into the burning, fiery furnace! I fear some evil will befall us."

Foh-Kyung, a green-and-gold god in each hand, stopped and turned. His eyes smiled at Dong-Yung. She was so little and so precious and so afraid! Dong-Yung saw the look of relenting. She held his sleeve the tighter.

"Light of my Eyes, do good deeds to me. My faith is but a little faith. How could it be great unto thy great faith? Be gentle with my kitchen gods. Do not utterly destroy them. I will hide them."

Foh-Kyung smiled yet more, and gave the plaster gods into her hands as one would give a toy to a child.

"They are thine. Do with them as thou wilt, but no more set them up in this stove corner and offer them morning rice. They are but painted, plastered gods. I worship the spirit above."

Foh-Kyung sat down at the men's table in the men's room beyond. An amah brought him rice and tea. Other men of the household there was none, and he ate his meal alone. From the women's room across the court came a shrill round of voices. The voice of the great wife was loudest and shrillest. The voices of the children, his sons and daughters, rose and fell with clear childish insistence among the older voices. The amah's voice laughed with an equal gaiety.

Dong-Yung hid away the plastered green-and-gold gods. Her heart was filled with a delicious fear. Her lord was even master of the gods. He picked them up in his two hands, he carried them about as carelessly as a man carries a boy child astride his shoulder; he would even have cast them into the fire! Truly, she shivered with delight. Nevertheless, she was glad she had hidden them safely away. In the corner of the kitchen stood a box of white pigskin with beaten brass clasps made like the outspread wings of a butterfly. Underneath the piles of satin she had hidden them, and the key to the butterfly clasps was safe in her belt-jacket.

Dong-Yung stood in the kitchen door and watched Foh-Kyung.

"Does my lord wish for anything?"

Foh-Kyung turned, and saw her standing there in the

doorway. Behind her were the white stove and the sun-filled, empty niche. The light flooded through the doorway. Foh-Kyung set down his rice-bowl from his left hand and his ivory chop-sticks from his right. He stood before her.

"Truly, Dong-Yung, I want thee. Do not go away and leave me. Do not cross to the eating-room of the women and children. Eat with me."

"It has not been heard of in the Middle Kingdom for a woman to eat with a man."

"Nevertheless, it shall be. Come!"

Dong-Yung entered slowly. The light in this dim room was all gathered upon the person of Foh-Kyung, in the gleaming patterned roses of his gown, in his deep amethyst ring, in his eyes. Dong-Yung came because of his eyes. She crossed the room slowly, swaying with that peculiar grace of small-footed women, till she stood at the table beside Foh-Kyung. She was now even more afraid than when he would have cast the kitchen gods into the fire. They were but gods, kitchen gods, that he was about to break; this was the primeval bondage of the land, ancient custom.

"Give me thy hand and look up with thine eyes and thy heart."

Dong-Yung touched his hand. Foh-Kyung looked up as if he saw into the ether beyond, and there saw a spirit vision of ineffable radiance. But Dong-Yung watched him. She saw him transfigured with an inner light. His eyes moved in prayer. The exaltation spread out from him to her, it tingled through their finger-tips, it covered her from head to foot.

Foh-Kyung drooped her hand and moved. Dong-Yung leaned nearer.

"I, too, would believe the Jesus way."

In the peculiar quiet of mid-afternoon, when the shadows begin to creep down from the eaves of the pagodas and zigzag across the rice-fields to bed, Foh-Kyung and Dong-Yung arrived at the camp-ground of the foreigners. The lazy native streets were still dull with the end of labour. At the gate of the camp-ground the rickshaw coolies tipped down the bamboo shafts, to the ground.

Dong-Yung stepped out quickly, and looked at her lord and master. He smiled.

"Nay, I do not fear," Dong-Yung answered, with her eyes on his face. "Yet this place is strange, and lays a coldness around my heart."

"Regard not their awkward ways," said Foh-Kyung, as he turned in at the gate; "in their hearts they have the secret of life."

The gate-keeper bowed, and slipped the coin, warm from Foh-Kyung's hand, into his ready pocket.

"Walk beside me, little Wife of my Heart." Foh-Kyung stopped in the wide gravelled road and waited for Dong-Yung. Standing there in the sunlight, more vivid yet than the light itself, in his imperial yellow robes, he was the end of life, nay, life itself, to Dong-Yung. "We go to the house of the foreign priest to seek until we find the foreign God. Let us go side by side."

Dong-Yung, stepping with slow, small-footed grace, walked beside him.

"My understanding is as the understanding of a little child, beloved Teacher; but my heart lies like a shell in thy hand, its words but as the echo of thine. My honour is great that thou do not forget me in the magnitude of the search."

Dong-Yung's pleated satin skirts swayed to and fro against the imperial yellow of Foh-Kyung's robe. Her face coloured like a pale spring blossom, looked strangely ethereal above her brocade jacket. Her heart still beat thickly, half with fear and half with the secret rapture of their quest and her lord's desire for her.

Foh-Kyung took a silken and ivory fan from an inner pocket and spread it in the air. Dong-Yung knew the fan well. It came from a famous jeweller's on Nanking Road, and had been designed by an old court poet of long ago. The tiny ivory spokes were fretted like ivy-twigs in the North, but on the leaves of silk was painted a love-story of the South. There was a tea-house, with a maiden playing a lute, and the words of the song, fantastic black ideographs, floated off to the ears of her

lover. Foh-Kyung spread out its leaves in the sun, and looked at it and smiled."

"Never is the heart of man satisfied," he said, "alone. Neither when the willow fuzz flies in the spring, or when the midnight snow silvers the palms. Least of all is it satisfied when it seeks the presence of God above. I want thee beside me."

Dong-Yung hid her delight. Already for the third time he said those words—those words that changed all the world from one of a loving following-after to a marvelous oneness.

So they stepped across the lawn together. It was to Dong-Yung as if she stepped into an unknown land. She walked on flat green grass. Flowers in stiff and ordered rows went sedately round and round beneath a lurid red brick wall. A strange, square-cornered, flat-topped house squatted in the midst of the flat green grass. On the lawn at one side was a white-covered table, with a man and a woman sitting beside it. The four corners of the table-cloth dripped downward to the flat green grass. It was all very strange and ugly. Perhaps it was a garden, but no one would have guessed it. Dong-Yung longed to put each flower plant in a dragon bowl by itself and place it where the sun caught its petals one by one as the hours flew by. She longed for a narrow, tile-edged patch to guide her feet through all that flat green expanse. A little shiver ran over her. She looked back, down the wide gravelled way, through the gate, where the gate-keeper sat, tipped back against the wall on his stool, to the shop of the money-changer's opposite. A boy leaned half across the polished wood counter and shook his fist in the face of the money-changer. "Thou thief!" he cried. "Give me my two cash!" Dong-Yung was reassured. Around her lay all the dear familiar things; at her side walked her lord and master. And he had said they were seeking a new freedom, a God of love. Her thoughts stirred at her heart and caught her breath away.

The foreigners rose to greet them. Dong-Yung touched the hand of an alien man. She did not like it at all. The foreign-born woman made her sit down beside her, and

offered her bitter, strong tea in delicate, lidless cups, with handles bent like a twisted flower-branch.

"I have been meaning to call for a long time, Mrs. Li," said the foreign-born woman.

"The great wife will receive thee with much honour," Dong-Yung answered.

"I am so glad you came with your husband."

"Yes," Dong-Yung answered, with a little smile. "The customs of the foreign-born are pleasant to our eyes."

"I am glad you like them," said the foreign-born woman. "I couldn't bear not to go everywhere with my husband."

Dong-Yung liked her suddenly on account of the look that sprang up a moment in her eyes and vanished again. She looked across at the priest, her husband, a man in black, with thin lips and seeing eyes. The eyes of the foreign woman, looking at the priest, her husband, showed how much she loved him. "She loves him even as a small wife loves," Dong-Yung thought to herself. Dong-Yung watched the two men, the one in imperial yellow, the one in black, sitting beside each other and talking. Dong-Yung knew they were talking of the search. The foreign-born woman was speaking to her again.

"The doctor told me I would die if I came to China; but John felt he had a call. I would not stand in his way."

The woman's face was illumined.

"And now you are very happy?" Dong-Yung announced.

"And now I am very happy; just as you will be very happy."

"I am always happy since my lord took me for his small wife." Dong-Yung matched her happiness with the happiness of the foreign-born woman, proudly, with assurance. In her heart she knew no woman, born to eat bitterness, had ever been so happy as she in all the worlds beneath the heavens. She looked around her, beyond the failure of the foreign woman's garden, at the piled, peaked roofs of China looking over the wall. The fragrance of a blossoming plum-tree stole across from

a Chinese courtyard, and a peach-branch waved pink in the air. A wonder of contentment filled Dong-Yung.

All the while Foh-Kyung was talking. Dong-Yung turned back from all the greenness around her to listen. He sat very still, with his hands hid in his sleeves. The wave-ridged hem of his robe—blue and green and purple and red and yellow—was spread out decorously above his feet. Dong-Yung looked and looked at him, so still and motionless and so gorgeously arrayed. She looked from his feet, long, slim, in black satin slippers, and close-fitting white muslin socks, to the feet of the foreign priest. His feet were huge, ugly black things. From his feet Dong-Yung's eyes crept up to his face, over his priestly black clothes, rimmed with stiff white at wrist and throat. Yes, his face was even as the face of a priest, of one who serves between the gods and men, a face of seeing eyes and a rigid mouth. Dong-Yung shuddered.

"And so we have come, even as the foreign-born God tells us, a man and his wife, to believe the Jesus way."

Foh-Kyung spoke in a low voice, but his face smiled. Dong-Yung smiled, too, at his open, triumphant declarations. She said over his words to herself, under her breath, so that she would remember them surely when she wanted to call them back to whisper to her heart in the dark of some night. "We two, a man and his wife"—only dimly, with the heart of a little child, did Dong-Yung understand and follow Foh-Kyung; but the throb of her heart answered the hidden light in his eyes.

The foreign-born priest stood up. The same light shone in his eyes. It was a rapture, an exaltation. Suddenly an unheard-of-thing happened. The outside kingdom woman put her arms around Dong-Yung! Dong-Yung was terrified. She was held tight against the other woman's shoulder. The foreign-born woman used a strange perfume. Dong-Yung only half heard her whispered words.

"We are like that, too. We could not be separated. Oh, you will be happy!"

Dong-Yung thought of the other woman. "In her

heart she is humble and seemly. It is only her speech and her ways that are unfitting."

"We are going into the chapel a moment," said the priest. "Will you come, too?"

Dong-Yung looked at Foh-Kyung, a swift upward glance, like the sudden sweep of wings. She read his answer in his eyes. He wanted her to come. Not even in the temple of the foreign-born God did he wish to be without her.

A coolie called the foreign-born woman away.

The priest, in his tight trousers, and jacket, black and covered with a multitude of round flat buttons, stood up, and led the way into the house and down a long corridor to a closed door at the end. Dong-Yung hurried behind the two men. At the door the priest stood aside and held it open for her to pass in first. She hesitated. Foh-Kyung nodded.

"Do not think fearful things, little Princess," he whispered. "Enter, and be not afraid. There is no fear in the worship of Jesus."

So Dong-Yung crossed the threshold first. Something caught her breath away, just as the chanting of the dragon priests always did. She took a few steps forward and stood behind a low-backed bench. Before her, the light streamed into the little chapel through one luminous window of coloured glass above the altar. It lay all over the grey-tiled floor in roses and sunflowers of pink and gold. A deep purple stripe fell across the head of the black-robed priest. Dong-Yung was glad of that. It made his robe less hideous, and she could not understand how one could serve a god unless in beautiful robes. On the altar beneath the window of coloured flowers were two tall silver candlesticks, with smooth white tapers. A wide-mouthed vase filled with Chinese lilies stood between them. The whole chapel was faintly fragrant with their incense. So even the foreign-born worshipers lit candles, and offered the scent of the lilies to their spirit God. Truly, all the gods of all the earth and in the sky are lovers of lit candles and flowers. Also, one prays to all gods.

The place was very quiet and peaceful, mottled with

the gorgeous, flowerlike splashes of colour. The waiting candles, the echoes of many prayers, the blossom of worship filled the tiny chapel. Dong-Yung liked it, despite herself, despite the strangeness of the imageless altar, despite the clothes of the priest. She stood quite still behind the bench flooded and filled with an all-pervading sense of happiness.

Foh-Kyung and the black-robed priest walked past her, down the little aisle, to a shiny brass railing that went like a fence round before the altar. The foreign-born priest laid one hand on the railing as if to kneel down, but Foh-Kyung turned and beckoned with his chin to Dong-Yung to come. She obeyed at once. She was surprisingly unafraid. Her feet walked through the patterns of colour, which slid over her head and hands, gold from the gold of a cross and purple from the robe of a king. As if stepping through a rainbow, she came slowly down the aisle to the waiting men, and in her heart and in her eyes lay the light of all love and trust.

Foh-Kyung caught her hand.

"See, I take her hand," he said to the priest, "even as you would take the hand of your wife, proud and unashamed in the presence of your God. Even as your love is, so shall ours be. Where the thoughts of my heart lead, the heart of my small wife follows. Give us your blessing."

Foh-Kyung drew Dong-Yung to her knees beside him. His face was hidden, after the manner of the foreign worshipers; but hers was uplifted, her eyes gazing at the glass with the colours of many flowers and the shapes of men and angels. She was happier than she had ever been—happier even than when she had first worshiped the ancestral tablets with her lord and master, happier even than at the feast of the dead, when they laid their food offerings on the shaven grave-mounds. She felt closer to Foh-Kyung than in all her life before.

She waited. The silence grew and grew till in the heart of it something ominous took the place of its all-pervading peace. Foh-Kyung lifted his face from his hands and rose to his feet. Dong-Yung turned, still kneeling, to scan his eyes. The black-robed priest stood

off and looked at them with horror. Surely it was horror! Never had Dong-Yung really liked him. Slowly she rose, and stood beside and a little behind Foh-Kyung. He had not blessed them. Faintly, from beyond the walls of the Christian chapel came the beating of drums. Devil-drums they were. Dong-Yung half smiled at the long-known familiar sound.

"Your small wife?" said the priest. "Have you another wife?"

"Assuredly," Foh-Kyung answered. "All men have a great wife first; but this, my small wife, is the wife of my heart. Together we have come to seek and find the Jesus way."

The priest wiped his hand across his face. Dong-Yung saw that it was wet with tiny round balls of sweat. His mouth had suddenly become one thin red line, but in his eyes lay pain.

"Impossible," he said. His voice was quite different now, and sounded like bits of metal falling on stone. "No man can enter the church while living in sin with a woman other than his lawful wife. If your desire is real, put her away."

With instant response, Foh-kyung made a stately bow.

"Alas! I have made a grievous mistake. The responsibility will be on my body. I thought all were welcome. We go. Later on, perhaps, we may meet again."

The priest spoke hurriedly.

"I do not understand your meaning. Is this belief of such light weight that you will toss it away for a sinful woman? Put her away, and come and believe."

But Foh-Kyung did not hear his words. As he turned away, Dong-Yung followed close behind her lord and master, only half comprehending, yet filled with a great fear. They went out again into the sunshine, out across the flat green grass, under the iron gateway, back into the Land of the Flowery Kingdom. Foh-Kyung did not speak until he put Dong-Yung in the rickshaw.

"Little Wife of my Heart," he said, "stop at the jeweller's and buy thee new ear-rings, these ear-rings of the sky-blue stone and sea-tears, and have thy hair

dressed and thy gowns perfumed, and place the two red circles on the smile of thy cheeks. To-night we will feast. Hast thou forgotten to-night is the Feast of the Lanterns, when all good Buddhists rejoice?"

He stood beside her rickshaw, in his imperial yellow garment hemmed with the rainbow waves of the sea, and smiled down into her eyes.

"But the spirit God of love, the foreign-born spirit God?" said Dong-Yung. "Shall we feast to him, too?"

"Nay, it is not fitting to feast to two gods at once," said Foh-Kyung. "Do as I have said."

He left her. Dong-Yung, riding through the sun-splashed afternoon, buying coloured jewels and flowery perfume and making herself beautiful, yet felt uneasy. She had not quite understood. A dim knowledge advanced toward her like a wall of fog. She pressed her two hands against it and held it off—held it off by sheer mental refusal to understand. In the courtyard at home the children were playing with their lighted animals, drawing their gaudy paper ducks, luminous with candle-light, to and fro on little standards set on four wheels. At the gate hung a tall red-and-white lantern, and over the roof floated a string of candle-lit balloons. In the ancestral hall the great wife had lit the red candles, speared on their slender spikes, before the tablets. In the kitchen the cooks and amahs were busy with the feast-cooking. Candles were stuck everywhere on the tables and benches. They threw little pools of light on the floor before the stove and looked at the empty niche. In the night it was merely a black hole in the stove filled with formless shadow. She wished—

"Dong-Yung, Flower in the House, where hast thou hidden the kitchen gods? Put them in their place." Foh-Kyung, still in imperial yellow, stood like a sun in the doorway.

Dong-Yung turned.

"But——"

"Put them back, little Jewel in the Hair. It is not permitted to worship the spirit God. There are bars and gates. The spirit of man must turn back in the searching, turn back to the images of plaster and paint."

Dong-Yung let the wall of fog slide over her. She dropped her resistance. She knew.

"Nay, not the spirit of man. It is but natural that the great God does not wish the importunings of a small wife. Worship thou alone the great God, and the shadow of that worship will fall on my heart."

"Nay, I cannot worship alone. My worship is not acceptable in the sight of the foreign God. My ways are not his ways."

Foh-Kyung's face was unlined and calm, yet Dong-Yung felt the hidden agony of his soul, flung back from its quest upon gods of plaster and paint.

"But I know the thoughts of thy heart, O Lord and Master, white and fragrant as the lily-buds that opened to-day. Has thy wish changed?"

"Nay, my wish is even the same, but it is not permitted to a man of two wives to be a follower of the spirit God."

Dong-Yung had known it all along. This knowledge came with no surprise. It was she who kept him from the path of his desire!

"Put back the kitchen gods," said Foh-Kyung. "We will live and believe and die even as our fathers have done. The gate to the God of love is closed."

The feast was served. In the sky one moon blotted out a world of stars. Foh-Kyung sat alone, smoking. Laughter and talk filled the women's wing. The amahs and coolies were resting outside. A thin reed of music crept in and out among the laughter and talk, from the reed flute of the cook. The kitchen was quite empty. One candle on the table sent up a long smoky tongue of flame. The fire still smouldered in the corner. A little wind shook the cypress-branches without, and carried the scent of the opened lilies into the room.

Dong-Yung, still arrayed for feasting, went to the pigskin trunk in the corner, fitted the key from her belt into the carven brass wings of the butterfly, and lifted out the kitchen gods. One in each hand, she held them, green and gold. She put them back in their niche, and lifted up a bowl of rice to their feet, and beat her head on the ground before them.

"Forgive me, O my kitchen gods, forgive my injurious hands and heart; but the love of my master is even greater than my fear of thee. Thou and I, we bar the gates of heaven from him."

When she had finished, she tiptoed around the room, touching the chairs and tables with caressing fingers. She stole out into the courtyard, and bent to inhale the lily fragrance, sweeter by night than by day. "An auspicious day," the gate-keeper had said that morning. Foh-Kyung had stood beside her, with his feet in the sunshine; she remembered the light in his eyes. She bent her head till the fingers of the lily-petals touched her cheek. She crept back through the house, and looked at Foh-Kyung smoking. His eyes were dull, even as are the eyes of sightless bronze Buddhas. No, she would never risk going in to speak to him. If she heard the sound of his voice, if he called her "little Flower of the House," she would never have the strength to go. So she stood in the doorway and looked at him much as one looks at a sun, till wherever else one looks, one sees the same sun against the sky.

In the formless shadow she made a great obeisance, spreading out her arms and pressing the palms of her hands against the floor.

"O my Lord and Master," she said, with her lips against the boards of the floor, softly, so that none might hear her—"O my Lord and Master, I go. Even a small wife may unbar the gates of heaven."

First, before she went, she cast the two kitchen gods, green and gold, of ancient plaster, into the embers of the fire. There in the morning the cook-rice amahs found the onyx stones that had been their eyes. The house was still unlocked, the gate-keeper at the feast. Like a shadow she moved along the wall and through the gate. The smell of the lilies blew past her. Drums and chants echoed up the road, and the sounds of manifold feastings. She crept away down by the wall, where the moon laid a strip of blackness, crept away to unbar the gates of heaven for her lord and master.

APRIL 25TH, AS USUAL

BY EDNA FERBER

From *Ladies Home Journal*

MRS. HOSEA C. BREWSTER always cleaned her house in September and April. She started with the attic and worked her purifying path down to the cellar in strict accordance with Article I, Section 1, Unwritten Rules for House Cleaning. For twenty-five years she had done it. For twenty-five years she had hated it—being an intelligent woman. For twenty-five years, towel swathed about her head, skirt pinned back, sleeves rolled up—the costume dedicated to house cleaning since the days of What's-Her-Name, mother of Lemuel (see Proverbs)—Mrs. Brewster had gone through the ceremony twice a year.

Furniture on the porch, woollens on the line, mattresses in the yard—everything that could be pounded, beaten, whisked, rubbed, flapped, shaken or aired was dragged out and subjected to one or all of these indignities. After which, completely cowed, they were dragged in again and set in their places. Year after year, in attic and in cellar, things had piled up higher and higher—useless things, sentimental things; things in trunks; things in chests; shelves full of things wrapped up in brown-paper parcels.

And boxes—oh, above all, boxes; pasteboard boxes, long and flat, square and oblong, each bearing weird and cryptic pencillings on one end; cryptic, that, is to anyone except Mrs. Brewster and you who have owned an attic. Thus “H’s Fshg Tckl” jabberwocked one long slim box. Another stunned you with “Cur Ted Slp g Pch.” A cabalistic third hid its contents under “Slp Cov Pinky Rm.” To say nothing of such curt yet intriguing fragments as “Blk Nt Drs” and “Sun Par Val.” Once

you had the code key they translated themselves simply enough into such homely items as Hosey's fishing tackle, canvas curtains for Ted's sleeping porch, slip-covers for Pinky's room, black net dress, sun-parlour valance.

The contents of those boxes formed a commentary on normal American household life as lived by Mr. and Mrs. Hosea C. Brewster, of Winnebago, Wisconsin. Hosey's rheumatism had prohibited trout fishing these ten years; Ted wrote from Arizona that "the li'l' ol' sky" was his sleeping-porch roof and you didn't have to worry out there about the neighbours seeing you in your pyjamas; Pink's rose-cretonne room had lacked an occupant since Pinky left the Winnebago High School for the Chicago Art Institute, thence to New York and those amazingly successful magazine covers that stare up at you from your table—young lady, hollow chested (she'd need to be with that décolletage), carrying feather fan. You could tell a Brewster cover at sight, without the fan. That leaves the black net dress and sun-parlour valance. The first had grown too tight under the arms (Mrs. Brewster's arms); the second had faded.

Now don't gather from this that Mrs. Brewster was an ample, pie-baking, ginghamed old soul who wore black silk and a crushed-looking hat with a palsied rose atop it. Nor that Hosea C. Brewster was spectacled and slippered. Not at all. The Hosea C. Brewsters, of Winnebago, Wisconsin, were the people you've met on the veranda of the Moana Hotel at Honolulu, or at the top of Pike's Peak, or peering into the restless heart of Vesuvius. They were the prosperous Middle-Western type of citizen who runs down to Chicago to see the new plays and buy a hat, and to order a dozen Wedgwood salad plates at Field's.

Mrs. Brewster knew about Dunsany and Georgette and alligator pears; and Hosea Brewster was in the habit of dropping around to the Elks' Club, up above Schirmer's furniture store on Elm Street, at about five in the afternoon on his way home from the cold-storage plant. The Brewster house was honeycombed with sleeping porches and sun parlours and linen closets, and laundry

chutes and vegetable bins and electric surprises as your well-to-do Middle-Western home is likely to be.

That home had long ago grown too large for the two of them—physically, that is. But as the big frame house had expanded, so had they—intolerance and understanding and humanness—until now, as you talked with them, you felt that there was room and to spare of sun-filled mental chambers, and shelves well stored with experience, and pantries and bins and closets for all your worries and confidences.

But the attic! And the cellar! The attic was the kind of attic every woman longs for who hasn't one and every woman loathes who has. "If I only had some place to put things in!" wails the first. And, "If it weren't for the attic I'd have thrown this stuff away long ago," complains the second. Mrs. Brewster herself had helped plan it. Hardwood floored, spacious light, the Brewster attic revealed to you the social, æsthetic, educational and spiritual progress of the entire family as clearly as if a sociologist had chartered it.

Take, for example (before we run down to the cellar for a minute), the crayon portraits of Gran'ma and Gran'pa Brewster. When Ted had been a junior and Pinky a freshman at the Winnebago High School the crayon portraits had beamed down upon them from the living-room wall. To each of these worthy old people the artist had given a pair of hectic pink cheeks. Gran'ma Brewster especially, simpering down at you from the labyrinthian scrolls of her sextuple gold frame, was rouged like a soubrette and further embellished with a pair of gentian-blue eyes behind steel-bowed specs. Pinky—and in fact the entire Brewster household—had thought these massive atrocities the last word in artistic ornament. By the time she reached her sophomore year, Pinky had prevailed upon her mother to banish them to the dining-room. Then two years later, when the Chicago decorator did over the living-room and the dining-room, the crayons were relegated to the upstairs hall.

Ted and Pinky, away at school, began to bring their

friends back with them for the vacations. Pinky's room had been done over in cream enamel and rose-flowered cretonne. She said the chromos in the hall spoiled the entire second floor. So the gold frames, glittering undimmed, the cheeks as rosily glowing as ever, found temporary resting-place in a nondescript back chamber known as the sewing room. Then the new sleeping porch was built for Ted, and the portraits ended their journeying in the attic.

One paragraph will cover the cellar. Stationary tubs, laundry stove. Behind that, bin for potatoes, bin for carrots, bins for onions, apples, cabbages. Boxed shelves for preserves. And behind that Hosea C. Brewster's *bête noir* and plaything, tyrant and slave—the furnace. "She's eating up coal this winter," Hosea Brewster would complain. Or: "Give her a little more draft, Fred." Fred, of the furnace and lawn mower, would shake a doleful head. "She ain't drawin' good. I do' know what's got into her."

By noon of this particular September day—a blue-and-gold Wisconsin September day—Mrs. Brewster had reached that stage in the cleaning of the attic when it looked as if it would never be clean and orderly again. Taking into consideration Miz' Merz (Mis' Merz by-the-day, you understand) and Gussie, the girl, and Fred, there was very little necessity for Mrs. Brewster's official house-cleaning uniform. She might have unpinned her skirt, unbound her head, rolled down her sleeves and left for the day, serene in the knowledge that no corner, no chandelier, no mirror, no curlicue so hidden, so high, so glittering, so ornate that it might hope to escape the rag or brush of one or the other of this relentless and expert crew.

Every year, twice a year, as this box, that trunk or chest was opened and its contents revealed, Mis' Merz would say: "You keepin' this, Miz' Brewster?"

"That? Oh, dear yes!" Or: "Well—I don't know. You can take that home with you if you want it. It might make over for Minnie."

Yet why, in the name of all that's ridiculous, did she treasure the funeral wheat wreath in the walnut frame?

Nothing is more *passé* than a last summer's hat, yet the leghorn and pink-cambric-rose thing in the tin trunk was the one Mrs. Brewster had worn when a bride. Then the plaid kilted dress with the black velvet monkey jacket that Pinky had worn when she spoke her first piece at the age of seven—well, these were things that even the rapacious eye of Miz' Merz (by-the-day) passed by unbrightened by covetousness.

The smell of soap and water, and cedar, and moth balls, and dust, and the ghost of a perfumery that Pinky used to use pervaded the hot attic. Mrs. Brewster, head and shoulders in a trunk, was trying not to listen and not to seem not to listen to Miz' Merz' recital of her husband's relations' latest flagrancy.

"'Families is nix,' I says. 'I got my own fam'ly to look out fuh,' I says. Like that. 'Well,' s's he, 'w'en it comes to *that*,' s's he, 'I guess I got some——'" Punctuated by thumps, splatterings, swashings and much heavy breathing, so that the sound of light footsteps along the second-floor hallway, a young clear voice calling, then the same footsteps, fleeter now, on the attic stairway, were quite unheard.

Pinky's arm were around her mother's neck and for one awful moment it looked as if both were to be decapitated by the trunk lid, so violent had been Mrs. Brewster's start of surprise.

Incoherent little cries, and sentences unfinished.

"Pinky! Why—my baby! We didn't get your telegram. Did you——"

"No; I didn't. I just thought I—— Don't look so dazed, mummy—— You're all smudged too—what in the world!" Pinky straightened her hat and looked about the attic. "Why, mother! You're—you're house cleaning!" There was a stunned sort of look on her face. Pinky's last visit home had been in June, all hammocks, and roses, and especially baked things, and motor trips into the country.

"Of course. This is September. But if I'd known you were coming—— Come here to the window. Let mother see you. Is that the kind of hat they're—why, it's a winter one, isn't it? Already! Dear me, I've

just got used to the angle of my summer one. You must telephone father."

Miz' Merz, damply calicoed, rose from a corner and came forward, wiping a moist and parboiled hand on her skirt. "Ha' do, Pinky? Ain't forgot your old friends, have you?"

"It's Mrs. Merz!" Pinky put her cool, sweet fingers into the other woman's spongy clasp. "Why, hello, Mrs. Merz! Of course when there's house cleaning—I'd forgotten all about house cleaning—that there was such a thing, I mean."

"It's got to be done," replied Miz' Merz severely.

Pinky, suddenly looking like one of her own magazine covers (in tailor clothes), turned swiftly to her mother. "Nothing of the kind," she said crisply. She looked about the hot, dusty, littered room. She included and then banished it all with one sweeping gesture. "Nothing of the kind. This is—this is an anachronism."

"Mebbe so," retorted Miz' Merz with equal crispness. "But it's got to be cleaned just the same. Yessir; it's got to be cleaned."

They smiled at each other then, the mother and daughter. They descended the winding attic stairs happily, talking very fast and interrupting each other.

Mrs. Brewster's skirt was still pinned up. Her hair was bound in the protecting towel. "You must telephone father. No, let's surprise him. You'll hate the dinner—built around Miz' Merz; you know—boiled. Well, you know what a despot she is."

It was hot for September, in Wisconsin. As they came out to the porch Pinky saw that there were tiny beads of moisture under her mother's eyes and about her chin. The sight infuriated her somehow. "Well, really, mother!"

Mrs. Brewster unpinned her skirt and smoothed it down and smiled at Pinky, all unconscious that she looked like a plump, pink Sister of Mercy with that towel bound tightly about her hair. With a swift movement Pinky unpinned the towel, unwound it, dabbed with it tenderly at her mother's chin and brow, rolled it into a vicious wad and hurled it through the open doorway.

"Now just what does that mean?" said Mrs. Brewster equably. "Take off your hat and coat, Pinky, but don't treat them that way—unless that's the way they're doing in New York. Everything is so informal since the war." She had a pretty wit of her own, Mrs. Brewster.

Of course Pinky laughed then, and kissed her mother and hugged her hard. "It's just that it seems so idiotic—your digging around in an attic in this day and age! Why it's—it's——" Pinky could express herself much more clearly in colours than in words. "There is no such thing as an attic. People don't clean them any more. I never realized before—this huge house. It has been wonderful to come back to, of course. But just you and dad." She stopped. She raised two young fists high in important anger. "Do you *like* cleaning the attic?"

"Why, no. I hate it."

"Then why in the world——"

"I've always done it, Pinky. And while they may not be wearing attics in New York, we haven't taken them off in Winnebago. Come on up to your room, dear. It looks bare. If I'd known you were coming—the slip covers——"

"Are they in the box in the attic labeled 'Slp Cov Pinky Rum'?" She succeeded in slurring it ludicrously.

It brought an appreciative giggle from Mrs. Brewster. A giggle need not be inconsistent with fifty years, especially if one's nose wrinkles up delightfully in the act. But no smile curved the daughter's stern young lips. Together they went up to Pinky's old room (the older woman stopped to pick up the crumpled towel on the hall floor). On the way they paused at the door of Mrs. Brewster's bedroom, so cool, so spacious, all soft greys and blues.

Suddenly Pinky's eyes widened with horror. She pointed an accusing forefinger at a large dark object in a corner near a window. "That's the old walnut desk!" she exclaimed.

"I know it."

The girl turned, half amused, half annoyed. "Oh.

mother dear! That's the situation in a nutshell. Without a shadow of doubt, there's an eradicable streak of black walnut in your gray-enamel make-up."

"Eradicable! That's a grand word, Pinky. Stylish! I never expected to meet it out of a book. And fu'thermore, as Miz' Merz would say, I didn't know there was any situation."

"I meant the attic. And it's more than a situation. It's a state of mind."

Mrs. Brewster had disappeared into the depths of her clothes closet. Her voice sounded muffled. "Pinky, you're talking the way they did at that tea you gave for father and me when we visited New York last winter." She emerged with a cool-looking blue kimono. "Here. Put this on. Father'll be home at twelve-thirty, for dinner, you know. You'll want a bath, won't you, dear?"

"Yes. Mummy, is it boiled—honestly?—on a day like this?"

"With onions," said Mrs. Brewster firmly.

Fifteen minutes later Pinky, splashing in a cool tub, heard the voice of Miz' Merz, high-pitched with excitement and a certain awful joy: "Miz' Brewster! Oh, Miz' Brewster! I found a moth in Mr. Brewster's winter flannels!"

"Oh!" in choked accents of fury from Pinky; and she brought a hard young fist down in the water—spat!—so that it splashed ceiling, hair and floor impartially.

Still, it was a cool and serene young daughter who greeted Hosea Brewster as he came limping up the porch stairs. He placed the flat of the foot down at each step, instead of heel and ball. It gave him a queer, hitching gait. The girl felt a sharp little constriction of her throat as she marked that rheumatic limp. "It's the beastly Wisconsin winters," she told herself. Then, darting out at him from the corner where she had been hiding: "S'prise! S'prise!"

His plump blond face, flushed with the unwonted heat, went darkly red. He dropped his hat. His arms gathered her in. Her fresh young cheek was pressed

against his dear, prickly one. So they stood for a long minute—close.

“Need a shave, dad.”

“Well, gosh, how did I know my best girl was coming!” He held her off. “What’s the matter, Pink? Don’t they like your covers any more?”

“Not a thing, Hosey. Don’t get fresh. They’re re-decorating my studio—you know—plasterers and stuff. I couldn’t work. And I was lonesome for you.”

Hosea Brewster went to the open doorway and gave a long whistle with a little quirk at the end. Then he came back to Pinky in the wide-seated porch swing. “You know,” he said, his voice lowered confidentially, “I thought I’d take mother to New York for ten days or so. See the shows, and run around and eat at the dens of wickedness. She likes it for a change.”

Pinky sat up, tense. “For a change? Dad, I want to talk to you about that. Mother needs——”

Mrs. Brewster’s light footstep sounded in the hall. She wore an all-enveloping gingham apron. “How did you like your surprise, father?” She came over to him and kissed the top of his head. “I’m getting dinner so that Gussie can go on with the attic. Everything’s ready if you want to come in. I didn’t want to dish up until you were at the table, so’s everything would be hot.” She threw a laughing glance at Pinky.

But when they were seated, there appeared a platter of cold, thinly sliced ham for Pinky, and a crisp salad, and a featherweight cheese soufflé, and iced tea, and a dessert coolly capped with whipped cream.

“But, mother, you shouldn’t have——” feebly.

“There are always a lot of things in the house. You know that. I just wanted to tease you.”

Father Brewster lingered for an unwonted hour after the midday meal. But two o’clock found him back at the cold-storage plant. Pinky watched him go, a speculative look in her eyes.

She visited the attic that afternoon at four, when it was again neat, clean, orderly, smelling of soap and sunshine. Standing there in the centre of the big room, freshly napped, smartly coiffed, blue-serged, trim, the

very concentrated essence of modernity, she eyed with stern deliberation the funeral wheat wreath in its walnut frame; the trunks; the chests; the boxes all shelved and neatly inscribed with their "H's Fshg Tckl" and "Blk Nt Drs."

"Barbaric!" she said aloud, though she stood there alone. "Medieval! Mad! It has got to be stopped. Slavery!" After which she went downstairs and picked golden glow for the living-room vases and scarlet salvia for the bowl in the dining-room.

Still, as one saw Mrs. Brewster's tired droop at supper that night, there is no denying that there seemed some justification for Pinky's volcanic remarks.

Hosea Brewster announced, after supper, that he and Fred were going to have a session with the furnace; she needed going over in September before they began firing up for the winter.

"I'll go down with you," said Pinky.

"No, you stay up here with mother. You'll get all ashes and coal dust."

But Pinky was firm. "Mother's half dead. She's going straight up to bed, after that darned old attic. I'll come up to tuck you in, mummy."

And though she did not descend to the cellar until the overhauling process was nearly completed she did come down in time for the last of the scene. She perched at the foot of the stairs and watched the two men, overalled, sooty, tobacco-wreathed and happy. When, finally, Hosea Brewster knocked the ashes out of his stubby black pipe, dusted his sooty hands together briskly and began to peel his overalls, Pinky came forward.

She put her hand on his arm. "Dad, I want to talk to you."

"Careful there. Better not touch me. I'm all dirt. G'night, Fred."

"Listen, dad. Mother isn't well."

He stopped then, with one overall leg off and the other on, and looked at her. "Huh? What d'you mean—isn't well? Mother." His mouth was open. His eyes looked suddenly strained.

"This house—it's killing her. She could hardly keep her eyes open at supper. It's too much for her. She ought to be enjoying herself—like other women. She's a slave to the attic and all those huge rooms. And you're another."

"Me?" feebly.

"Yes. A slave to this furnace. You said yourself to Fred, just now, that it was all worn out, and needed new pipes or something—I don't know what. And that coal was so high it would be cheaper using dollar bills for fuel. Oh, I know you were just being funny. But it was partly true. Wasn't it? Wasn't it?"

"Yeh, but listen here, Paula." He never called her Paula unless he was terribly disturbed. "About mother—you said——"

"You and she ought to go away this winter—not just for a trip, but to stay. You"—she drew a long breath and made the plunge—"you ought to give up the house."

"Give up——"

"Permanently. Mother and you are buried alive here. You ought to come to New York to live. Both of you will love it when you are there for a few days. I don't mean to come to a hotel. I mean to take a little apartment, a furnished apartment at first to see how you like it—two rooms and kitchenette, like a play-house."

Hosey Brewster looked down at his own big bulk. Then around the great furnace room. "Oh, but listen——"

"No, I want you to listen first. Mother's worn out, I tell you. It isn't as if she were the old-fashioned kind; she isn't. She loves the theatres, and pretty hats, and shoes with buckles, and lobster, and concerts."

He broke in again: "Sure; she likes 'em for change. But for a steady diet—— Besides, I've got a business to 'tend to. My gosh! I've got a business to——"

"You know perfectly well that Wetzler practically runs the whole thing—or could, if you'd let him." Youth is cruel like that, when it wants its way.

He did not even deny it. He seemed suddenly old. Pinky's heart smote her a little. "It's just that you've

got so used to this great barracks you don't know how unhappy it's making you. Why, mother said to-day that she hated it. I asked about the attic—the cleaning and all—and she said she hated it."

"Did she say that, Paula?"

"Yes."

He dusted his hands together, slowly, spiritlessly. His eyes looked pained and dull. "She did, h'm? You say she did?" He was talking to himself, and thinking, thinking.

Pinky, sensing victory, left him. She ran lightly up the cellar stairs, through the first-floor rooms and up to the second floor. Her mother's bedroom door was open.

A little mauve lamp shed its glow upon the tired woman in one of the plump, grey-enamel beds. "No, I'm not sleeping. Come here, dear. What in the world have you been doing in the cellar all this time?"

"Talking to dad." She came over and perched herself on the side of the bed. She looked down at her mother. Then she bent and kissed her. Mrs. Brewster looked incredibly girlish with the lamp's rosy glow on her face and her hair, warmly brown and profuse, rippling out over the pillow. Scarcely a thread of grey in it. "You know, mother, I think dad isn't well. He ought to go away."

As if by magic the youth and glow faded out of the face on the pillow. As she sat up, clutching her nightgown to her breast, she looked suddenly pinched and old. "What do you mean, Pinky! Father—but he isn't sick. He——"

"Not sick. I don't mean sick exactly. But sort of worn out. That furnace. He's sick and tired of the thing; that's what he said to Fred. He needs a change. He ought to retire and enjoy life. He could. This house is killing both of you. Why in the world don't you close it up, or sell it, and come to New York?"

"But we do. We did. Last winter——"

"I don't mean just for a little trip. I mean to live. Take a little two-room apartment in one of the new buildings—near my studio—and relax. Enjoy your-

selves. Meet new men and women. Live! You're in a rut—both of you. Besides, dad needs it. That rheumatism of his, with these Wisconsin winters——”

“But California—we could go to California for——”

“That's only a stop-gap. Get your little place in New York all settled, and then run away whenever you like, without feeling that this great bulk of a house is waiting for you. Father hates it; I know it.”

“Did he ever say so?”

“Well, practically. He thinks you're fond of it. He——”

Slow steps ascending the stairs—heavy, painful steps. The two women listened in silence. Every footfall seemed to emphasize Pinky's words. The older woman turned her face toward the sound, her lips parted, her eyes anxious, tender.

“How tired he sounds,” said Pinky; “and old. And he's only—why, dad's only fifty-eight.”

“Fifty-seven,” snapped Mrs. Brewster sharply, protectingly.

Pinky leaned forward and kissed her. “Good night, mummy dear. You're so tired, aren't you?”

Her father stood in the doorway.

“Good night, dear. I ought to be tucking you into bed. It's all turned around, isn't it? Biscuits and honey for breakfast, remember.”

So Pinky went off to her own room (*sans* “slp cov”) and slept soundly, dreamlessly, as does one whose work is well done.

Three days later Pinky left. She waved a good-bye from the car platform, a radiant, electric, confident Pinky, her work well done.

“*Au 'voir!* The first of November! Everything begins then. You'll love it. You'll be real New Yorkers by Christmas. Now, no changing your minds, remember.”

And by Christmas, somehow, miraculously, there they were, real New Yorkers; or as real and as New York as anyone can be who is living in a studio apartment (duplex) that has been rented (furnished) from a lady who turned out to be from Des Moines.

When they arrived, Pinky had four apartments waiting for their inspection. She told them this in triumph, and well she might, it being the winter after the war, when New York apartments were as scarce as black diamonds and twice as costly.

Father Brewster, on hearing the price, emitted a long, low whistle and said: "How many rooms did you say?"

"Two—and a kitchenette, of course."

"Well, then, all I can say is the furniture ought to be solid gold for that; inlaid with rubies and picked out with platinum."

But it wasn't. In fact, it wasn't solid anything, being mostly of a very impermanent structure and style. Pinky explained that she had kept the best for the last. The thing that worried Father Brewster was that, no matter at what hour of the day they might happen to call on the prospective lessor, that person was always feminine and hatted. Once it was eleven in the morning. Once five in the afternoon.

"Do these New York women wear hats in the house all the time?" demanded Hosea Brewster worriedly. "I think they sleep in 'em. It's a wonder they ain't bald. Maybe they are. Maybe that's why. Anyway, it makes you feel like a book agent."

He sounded excited and tired. "Now, father!" said Mrs. Brewster, soothingly.

They were in the elevator that was taking them up to the fourth and (according to Pinky) choicest apartment. The building was what is known as a studio apartment, in the West Sixties. The corridors were done in red flagstones, with grey-tone walls. The metal doors were painted grey.

Pinky was snickering. "Now she'll say: 'Well, we've been very comfortable here.' They always do. Don't look too eager."

"No fear," put in Hosey Brewster.

"It's really lovely. And a real fireplace. Everything new and good. She's asking two hundred and twenty-five. Offer her one seventy-five. She'll take two hundred."

"You bet she will," growled Hosea.

She answered the door—hatted; hatted in henna, that being the season's chosen colour. A small dark foyer, overcrowded with furniture; a studio living-room, bright, high-ceilinged, smallish; one entire side was window. There were Japanese prints, and a baby grand piano, and a lot of tables, and a davenport placed the way they do it on the stage, with its back to the room and its arms to the fireplace, and a long table just behind it, with a lamp on it, and books, and a dull jar thing, just as you've seen it in the second-act library.

Hosea Brewster twisted his head around and up to gaze at the lofty ceiling. "Feel's if I was standing at the bottom of a well," he remarked.

But the hatted one did not hear him. "No; no dining-room," she was saying briskly. "No, indeed. I always use this gate-legged table. You see? It pulls out like this. You can easily seat six—eight, in fact."

"Heaven forbid!" in fervent *sotto voce* from Father Brewster.

"It's an enormous saving in time and labour."

"The—kitchen!" inquired Mrs. Brewster.

The hat waxed playful. "You'll never guess where the kitchen is!" She skipped across the room. "You see this screen?" They saw it. A really handsome affair, and so placed at one end of the room that it looked a part of it. "Come here." They came. The reverse side of the screen was dotted with hooks, and on each hook hung a pot, a pan, a ladle, a spoon. And there was the tiny gas range, the infinitesimal ice chest, the miniature sink. The whole would have been lost in one corner of the Brewster's Winnebago china closet.

"Why, how—how wonderful!" breathed Mrs. Brewster.

"Isn't it? So complete—and so convenient. I've cooked roasts, steaks, chops, everything, right here. It's just play."

A terrible fear seized upon Father Brewster. He eyed the sink and the tiny range with a suspicious eye. "The beds," he demanded, "where are the beds?"

She opened the little oven door and his heart sank. But, "They're upstairs," she said. "This is a duplex, you know."

A little flight of winding stairs ended in a balcony. The rail was hung with a gay mandarin robe. Two more steps and you were in the bedroom—a rather breathless little bedroom, profusely rose-coloured, and with whole battalions of photographs in flat silver frames standing about on dressing table, shelf, desk. The one window faced a grey brick wall.

They took the apartment. And thus began a life of ease and gayety for Mr. and Mrs. Hosea C. Brewster, of Winnebago, Wisconsin.

Pinky had dinner with them the first night, and they laughed a great deal, what with one thing and another. She sprang up to the balcony, and let down her bright hair, and leaned over the railing, *à la Juliet*, having first decked Hosey out in a sketchy but effective Romeo costume, consisting of a hastily snatched up scarf over one shoulder, Pinky's little turban, and a frying pan for a lute. Mother Brewster did the Nurse, and by the time Hosea began his limping climb up the balcony, the turban over one eye and the scarf winding itself about his stocky legs, they ended by tumbling in a heap of tearful laughter.

After Pinky left there came upon them, in that cozy, little, two-room apartment, a feeling of desolation and vastness, and a terrible loneliness such as they had never dreamed of in the great twelve-room house in Winnebago. They kept close to each other. They toiled up the winding stairs together and stood a moment on the balcony, feigning a light-heartedness that neither of them felt.

They lay very still in the little stuffy rose-coloured room, and the street noises of New York came up to them—a loose chain flapping against the mud guard of a taxi; the jolt of a flat-wheeled Eighth Avenue street car; the roar of an L train; laughter; the bleat of a motor horn; a piano in the apartment next door, or upstairs, or down.

She thought, as she lay there, choking of the great

gracious grey-and-blue room at home, many-windowed, sweet-smelling, quiet. Quiet!

He thought, as he lay there, choking, of the gracious grey-blue room at home; many-windowed, sweet-smelling, quiet. Quiet!

Then, as he had said that night in September: "Sleeping, mother?"

"N-no. Not yet. Just dozing off."

"It's the strange beds, I guess. This is going to be great, though. Great!"

"My, yes!" agreed Mrs. Brewster, heartily.

They awoke next morning unrefreshed. Pa Brewster, back home in Winnebago, always whistled mournfully, off key, when he shaved. The more doleful his tune the happier his wife knew him to be. Also, she had learned to mark his progress by this or that passage in a refrain. Sometimes he sang, too (also off key), and you heard his genial roar all over the house. The louder he roared, and the more doleful the tune, the happier his frame of mind. Milly Brewster knew this. She had never known that she knew it. Neither had he. It was just one of those subconscious bits of marital knowledge that make for happiness and understanding.

When he sang "The Dying Cowboy's Lament" and came to the passage, "Oh, take me to the churchyard and lay the sod o-o-over me," Mrs. Brewster used to say: "Gussie, Mr. Brewster'll be down in ten minutes. You can start the eggs."

In the months of their gay life in Sixty-seventh Street, Hosey Brewster never once sang "The Dying Cowboy's Lament," nor whistled "In the Sweet By-and-By." No; he whistled not at all, or, when he did, gay bits of jazz heard at the theatre or in a restaurant the night before. He deceived no one, least of all himself. Sometimes his voice would trail off into nothingness, but he would catch the tune and toss it up again, heavily, as though it were a physical weight.

Theatres! Music! Restaurants! Teas! Shopping! The gay life!

"Enjoying yourself, Milly?" he would say.

"Time of my life, father."

She had had her hair dressed in those geometrical, undulations without which no New York audience feels itself clothed. They saw Pinky less frequently as time went on and her feeling or responsibility lessened. Besides, the magazine covers took most of her day. She gave a tea for her father and mother at her own studio, and Mrs. Brewster's hat, slippers, gown and manner equalled in line, style, cut and texture those of any other woman present, which rather surprised her until she had talked to five or six of them.

She and Hosey drifted together and compared notes. "Say, Milly," he confided, "they're all from Wisconsin—or approximately; Michigan and Minnesota, and Iowa, and around. Far's I can make out there's only one New Yorker, really, in the whole caboodle of 'em."

"Which one?"

"That kind of plain little one over there—sensible looking, with the blue suit. I was talking to her. She was born right here in New York, but she doesn't live here—that is, not in the city. Lives in some place in the country, in a house."

A sort of look came into Mrs. Brewster's eyes. "Is that so? I'd like to talk to her, Hosey. Take me over."

She did talk to the quiet little woman in the plain blue suit. And the quiet little woman said: "Oh, dear, yes!" She ignored her r's fascinatingly, as New Yorkers do. "We live in Connecticut. You see, you Wisconsin people have crowded us out of New York; no breathing space. Besides, how can one live here? I mean to say—live. And then the children—it's no place for children, grown up or otherwise. I love it—oh, yes, indeed. I love it. But it's too difficult."

Mrs. Brewster defended it like a true Westerner. "But if you have just a tiny apartment, with a kitchenette——"

The New York woman laughed. There was nothing malicious about her. But she laughed. "I tried it. There's one corner of my soul that's still wrinkled from the crushing. Everything in a heap. Not to speak of

the slavery of it. That—that deceitful, lying kitchenette.”

This was the first woman that Mrs. Brewster had talked to—really talked to—since leaving Winnebago. And she liked women. She missed them. At first she had eyed wonderingly, speculatively, the women she saw on Fifth Avenue. Swathed luxuriously in precious pelts, marvelously coiffed and hatted, wearing the frailest of boots and hose, exhaling a mysterious, heady scent, they were more like strange exotic birds than women.

The clerks in the shops, too—they were so remote, so contemptuous. When she went into Gerretson’s, back home, Nellie Monahan was likely to say: “You’ve certainly had a lot of wear out of that blue, Mrs. Brewster. Let’s see, you’ve had it two—three years this spring? My land! Let me show you our new taupes.”

Pa Brewster had taken to conversing with the doorman. That adamant individual, unaccustomed to being addressed as a human being, was startled at first, surly and distrustful. But he mellowed under Hosey’s simple and friendly advances. They became quite pals, these two—perhaps two as lonely men as you could find in all lonely New York.

“I guess you ain’t a New Yorker, huh?” Mike said.

“Me? No.”

“Th’ most of the folks in th’ buildin’ ain’t.”

“Ain’t!” Hosea Brewster was startled into it. “They’re artists, aren’t they? Most of ‘em?”

“No! Out-of-town folks, like you. West, East an’ Californy, an’ around there. Livin’ here, though. Seem t’ like it better’n where they come from. I dunno.”

Hosey Brewster took to eying them as Mrs. Brewster had eyed the women. He wondered about them, these tight, trim men, rather short of breath, buttoned so snugly into their shining shoes and their tailored clothes, with their necks bulging in a fold of fat above the back of their white linen collar. He knew that he would never be like them. It wasn’t his square-toe shoes that made the difference, or his grey hat, or his baggy trousers. It was something inside him—something he lacked, he

thought. It never occurred to him that it was something he possessed that they did not.

"Enjoying yourself, Milly?"

"I should say I am, father."

"That's good. No housework and responsibility to this, is there?"

"It's play."

She hated the toy gas stove, and the tiny ice chest and the screen pantry. All her married life she had kept house in a big, bounteous way; apples in barrels; butter in firkins; flour in sacks; eggs in boxes; sugar in bins; cream in crocks. Sometimes she told herself, bitterly, that it was easier to keep twelve rooms tidy and habitable than one combination kitchen-dining-and-living room.

"Chops taste good, Hosey?"

"Grand. But you oughtn't to be cooking around like this. We'll eat out to-morrow night somewhere, and go to a show."

"You're enjoying it, aren't you, Hosey, h'm?"

"It's the life, mother! It's the life!"

His ruddy colour began to fade. He took to haunting department-store kitchenware sections. He would come home with a new kind of cream whipper, or a patent device for the bathroom. He would tinker happily with this, driving a nail, adjusting a screw. At such times he was even known to begin to whistle some scrap of a doleful tune such as he used to hum. But he would change, quickly, into something lively. The price of butter, eggs, milk, cream and the like horrified his Wisconsin cold-storage sensibilities. He used often to go down to Fulton Market before daylight and walk about among the stalls and shops, piled with tons of food of all kinds. He would talk to the marketmen, and the buyers and grocers, and come away feeling almost happy for a time.

Then, one day, with a sort of shock, he remembered a farmer he had known back home in Winnebago. He knew the farmers for miles around, naturally, in his business. This man had been a steady butter-and-egg acquaintance, one of the wealthy farmers in that pros-

perous farming community. For his family's sake he had moved into town, a ruddy, rufous-bearded, clumping fellow, intelligent, kindly. They had sold the farm with a fine profit and had taken a boxlike house on Franklin Street. He had nothing to do but enjoy himself. You saw him out on the porch early, very early summer mornings.

You saw him ambling about the yard, poking at a weed here, a plant there. A terrible loneliness was upon him; a loneliness for the soil he had deserted. And slowly, resistlessly, the soil pulled at him with its black strength and its green tendrils, down, down, until he ceased to struggle and lay there clasped gently to her breast, the mistress he had thought to desert and who had him again at last, and forever.

"I don't know what ailed him," his widow had said, weeping. "He just seemed to kind of pine away."

It was one morning in April—one soft, golden April morning—when this memory had struck Hosey Brewster. He had been down at Fulton Market. Something about the place—the dewy fresh vegetables, the crates of eggs, the butter, the cheese—had brought such a surge of homesickness to him as to amount to an actual nausea. Riding uptown in the subway he had caught a glimpse of himself in a slot-machine mirror. His face was pale and somehow shrunken. He looked at his hands. The skin hung loose where the little pads of fat had plumped them out.

"Gosh!" he said. "Gosh, I——"

He thought, then, of the red-faced farmer who used to come clumping into the cold-storage warehouse in his big boots and his buffalo coat. A great fear swept over him and left him weak and sick.

The chill grandeur of the studio-building foyer stabbed him. The glittering lift made him dizzy, somehow, this morning. He shouldn't have gone out without some breakfast perhaps. He walked down the flagged corridor softly; turned the key ever so cautiously. She might still be sleeping. He turned the knob, gently; tiptoed in and, turning, fell over a heavy wooden object that lay directly in his path in the dim little hall.

A barked shin. A good round oath.

"Hosey! What's the matter? What——" She came running to him. She led him into the bright front room.

"What was that thing? A box or something, right there in front of the door. What the ——"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Hosey. You sometimes have breakfast downtown. I didn't know——"

Something in her voice—he stopped rubbing the injured shin to look up at her. Then he straightened slowly, his mouth ludicrously open. Her head was bound in a white towel. Her skirt was pinned back. Her sleeves were rolled up. Chairs, tables, rugs, ornaments were huddled in a promiscuous heap. Mrs. Hosea C. Brewster was cleaning house.

"Milly!" he began, sternly. "And that's just the thing you came here to get away from. If Pinky——"

"I didn't mean to, father. But when I got up this morning there was a letter—a letter from the woman who owns this apartment, you know. She asked if I'd go to the hall closet—the one she reserved for her own things, you know—and unlock it, and get out a box she told me about, and have the hall boy express it to her. And I did, and—look!"

Limping a little he followed her. She turned on the light that hung in the closet. Boxes—pasteboard boxes—each one bearing a cryptic penciling on the end that stared out at you. "Drp Stud Win," said one; "Sum Slp Cov Bedrm," another; "Toil. Set & Pic. Frms."

Mrs. Brewster turned to her husband, almost shamefacedly, and yet with a little air of defiance. "It—I don't know—it made me—not homesick, Hosey. Not homesick, exactly; but—well, I guess I'm not the only woman with a walnut streak in her modern make-up. Here's the woman—she came to the door with her hat on, and yet——"

Truth—blinding, white-hot truth—burst in upon him. "Mother," he said—and he stood up, suddenly robust, virile, alert—"mother, let's go home."

Mechanically she began to unpin the looped-back skirt.

"When?"

"Now."

"But, Hosey! Pinky—this flat—until June——"

"Now! Unless you want to stay. Unless you like it here in this—this make-believe, double-barreled, duplex do-funny of a studio thing. Let's go home, mother. Let's go home—and breathe."

In Wisconsin you are likely to find snow in April—snow or slush. The Brewsters found both. Yet on their way up from the station in 'Gene Buck's flivver taxi, they beamed out at it as if it were a carpet of daisies.

At the corner of Elm and Jackson Streets Hosey Brewster stuck his head out of the window. "Stop here a minute, will you, 'Gene?"

They stopped in front of Hengel's meat market, and Hosey went in. Mrs. Brewster leaned back without comment.

Inside the shop. "Well, I see you're back from the East," said Aug Hengel.

"Yep."

"We thought you'd given us the go-by, you stayed away so long."

"No, sir-ree! Say, Aug, give me that piece of bacon—the big piece. And send me up some corned beef tomorrow, for corned beef and cabbage. I'll take a steak along for to-night. Oh, about four pounds. That's right."

It seemed to him that nothing less than a side of beef could take out of his mouth the taste of those fiddling little lamb chops and the restaurant fare of the past six months.

All through the winter Fred had kept up a little heat in the house, with an eye to frozen water pipes. But there was a chill upon the place as they opened the door now. It was late afternoon. The house was very still, with the stillness of a dwelling that has long been uninhabited. The two stood there a moment, peering into the darkened rooms. Then Hosea Brewster strode forward, jerked up this curtain, that curtain with a sharp snap, flap! He stamped his feet to rid them of slush.

He took off his hat and threw it high in the air and opened his arms wide and emitted a whoop of sheer joy and relief.

"Welcome home! Home!"

She clung to him. "Oh, Hosey, isn't it wonderful? How big it looks! Huge!"

"Land, yes." He strode from hall to dining-room, from kitchen to library. "I know how a jack-in-the-box feels when the lid's opened. No wonder it grins and throws out its arms."

They did little talking after that. By five o'clock he was down in the cellar. She heard him making a great sound of rattling and bumping and shaking and pounding and shoveling. She smelled the acrid odour of his stubby black pipe.

"Hosey!"—from the top of the cellar stairs. "Hosey bring up a can of preserves when you come."

"What?"

"Can of preserves."

"What kind?"

"Any kind you like."

"Can I have two kinds?"

He brought up quince marmalade and her choicest damson plums. He put them down on the kitchen table and looked around, spitting his hands together briskly to rid them of dust. "She's burning pretty good now. That Fred! Don't any more know how to handle a boiler than a baby does. Is the house getting warmer?"

He clumped into the dining-room, through the butler's pantry, but he was back again in a wink, his eyes round. "Why, say, mother! You've got out the best dishes, and the silver, and the candles and all. And the tablecloth with the do-dads on it. Why——"

"I know it." She opened the oven door, took out a pan of biscuits and slid it deftly to one side. "It seems as if I can't spread enough. I'm going to use the biggest platters, and I've put two extra boards in the table. It's big enough to seat ten. I want everything big somehow. I've cooked enough potatoes for a regiment, and I know it's wasteful, and I don't care."

I'll eat in my kitchen apron, if you'll keep on your overalls. Come on."

He cut into the steak—a great thick slice. He knew she could never eat it, and she knew she could never eat it. But she did eat it all, ecstatically. And in a sort of ecstatic Nirvana the quiet and vastness and peace of the big old frame house settled down upon them.

The telephone in the hall rang startlingly, unexpectedly.

"Let me go, Milly."

"But who in the world! Nobody knows we're——"

He was at the telephone. "Who? Who? Oh." He turned: "It's Miz' Merz. She says her little Minnie went by at six and saw a light in the house. She—Hello! What? . . . She says she wants to know if she's to save time for you at the end of the month for the April cleaning."

Mrs. Brewster took the receiver from him: "The twenty-fifth, as usual, Miz' Merz. The twenty-fifth, as usual. The attic must be a sight."

VOLUME I
BOOK TWO

EACH IN HIS GENERATION

By MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT

From Scribner's Magazine

EVERY afternoon at four o'clock, except when the weather was very bad—autumn, winter, and spring—old Mr. Henry McCain drove up to the small, discreet, polished front door, in the small, discreet, fashionable street in which lived fairly old Mrs. Thomas Denby; got out, went up the white marble steps, rang the bell, and was admitted into the narrow but charming hall—dim turquoise-blue velvet panelled into the walls, an etching or two: Whistler, Brangwyn—by a trim parlour-maid. Ten generations, at least, of trim parlour-maids had opened the door for Mr. McCain. They had seen the sparkling victoria change, not too quickly, to a plum-coloured limousine; they had seen Mr. McCain become perhaps a trifle thinner, the colour in his cheeks become a trifle more confined and fixed, his white hair grow somewhat sparser, but beyond that they had seen very little indeed, although, when they had left Mr. McCain in the drawing-room with the announcement that Mrs. Denby would be down immediately, and were once again seeking the back of the house, no doubt their eyebrows, blonde, brunette, or red, apexed to a questioning angle.

In the manner of youth the parlour-maids had come, worked, fallen in love and departed, but Mr. McCain, in the manner of increasing age, had if anything grown more faithful and exact to the moment. If he were late the fraction of five minutes, one suspected that he regretted it, that it came near to spoiling his entire afternoon. He was not articulate, but occasionally he expressed an idea and the most common was that he "liked his things as he liked them"; his eggs, in other words, boiled just so long, no more—after sixty years of inner debate on the subject he had apparently arrived at the con-

clusion that boiled eggs were the only kind of eggs permissible—his life punctual and serene. The smallest manifestation of unexpectedness disturbed him. Obviously that was one reason why, after a youth not altogether constant, he had become so utterly constant where Mrs. Denby was concerned. She had a quality of perenniality, charming and assuring, even to each strand of her delicate brown hair. Grayness should have been creeping upon her, but it was not. It was doubtful if Mr. McCain permitted himself, even secretly, to wonder why. Effects, fastidious and constant, were all he demanded from life.

This had been going on for twenty years—this afternoon call; this slow drive afterward in the park; this return by dusk to the shining small house in the shining small street; the good-by, reticently ardent, as if it were not fully Mr. McCain's intention to return again in the evening. Mr. McCain would kiss Mrs. Denby's hand—slim, lovely, with a single gorgeous sapphire upon the third finger. "Good-by, my dear," he would say, "you have given me the most delightful afternoon of my life." For a moment Mrs. Denby's hand would linger on the bowed head; then Mr. McCain would straighten up, smile, square his shoulders in their smart, young-looking coat, and depart to his club, or the large, softly lit house where he dwelt alone. At dinner he would drink two glasses of champagne. Before he drained the last sip of the second pouring he would hold the glass up to the fire, so that the bronze coruscations at the heart of the wine glowed like fireflies in a gold dusk. One imagined him saying to himself: "A perfect woman! A perfect woman—God bless her!" Saying "God bless" any one, mind you, with a distinct warming of the heart, but a thoroughly late-Victorian disbelief in any god to bless. . . . At least, you thought as much.

And, of course, one had not the slightest notion whether he—old Mr. Henry McCain—was aware that this twenty years of devotion on his part to Mrs. Denby was the point upon which had come to focus the not inconsiderable contempt and hatred for him of his nephew Adrian.

It was an obvious convergence, this devotion of all the traits which composed, so Adrian imagined, the despicable soul that lay beneath his uncle's unangled exterior: undeviating self-indulgence; secrecy; utter selfishness—he was selfish

even to the woman he was supposed to love; that is, if he was capable of loving any one but himself—a bland hypocrisy; an unthinking conformation to the dictates of an unthinking world. The list could be multiplied. But to sum it up, here was epitomized, beautifully, concretely, the main and minor vices of a generation for which Adrian found little pity in his heart; a generation brittle as ice; a generation of secret diplomacy; a generation that in its youth had covered a lack of bathing by a vast amount of perfume. That was it—! That expressed it perfectly! The just summation! Camellias, and double intentions in speech, and unnecessary reticences, and refusals to meet the truth, and a deliberate hiding of uglinesses!

Most of the time Adrian was too busy to think about his uncle at all—he was a very busy man with his writing: journalistic writing; essays, political reviews, propaganda—and because he was busy he was usually well-content, and not uncharitable, except professionally; but once a month it was his duty to dine with his uncle, and then, for the rest of the night, he was disturbed, and awoke the next morning with the dusty feeling in his head of a man who has been slightly drunk. Old wounds were recalled, old scars inflamed; a childhood in which his uncle's figure had represented to him the terrors of sarcasm and repression; a youth in which, as his guardian, his uncle had deprecated all first fine hot-bloodednesses and enthusiasms; a young manhood in which he had been told cynically that the ways of society were good ways, and that the object of life was material advancement; advice which had been followed by the stimulus of an utter refusal to assist financially except where absolutely necessary. There had been willingness, you understand, to provide a gentleman's education, but no willingness to provide beyond that any of a gentleman's perquisites. That much of his early success had been due to this heroic upbringing, Adrian was too honest not to admit, but then—by God, it had been hard! All the colour of youth! No time to dream—except sorely! Some warping, some perversion! A gasping, heart-breaking knowledge that you could not possibly keep up with the people with whom, paradoxically enough, you were supposed to spend your leisure hours. Here was the making of a radical. And yet, despite all this, Adrian dined with his uncle once a month.

The mere fact that this was so, that it could be so, enraged him. It seemed a renunciation of all he affirmed; an implicit falsehood. He would have liked very much to have got to his feet, standing firmly on his two long, well-made legs, and have once and for all delivered himself of a final philippic. The philippic would have ended something like this:

"And this, sir, is the last time I sacrifice any of my good hours to you. Not because you are old, and therefore think you are wise, when you are not; not because you are blind and besotted and damned—a trunk of a tree filled with dry rot that presently a clean wind will blow away; not because your opinions, and the opinions of all like you, have long ago been proven the lies and idiocies that they are; not even because you haven't one single real right left to live—I haven't come to tell you these things, although they are true; for you are past hope and there is no use wasting words upon you; I have come to tell you that you bore me inexpressibly. (That would be the most dreadful revenge of all. He could see his uncle's face!) That you have a genius for taking the wrong side of every question, and I can no longer endure it. I dissipate my time. Good-night!"

He wouldn't have said it in quite so stately a way, possibly, the sentences would not have been quite so rounded, but the context would have been the same.

Glorious; but it wasn't said. Instead, once a month, he got into his dinner-jacket, brushed his hair very sleekly, walked six blocks, said good-evening to his uncle's butler, and went on back to the library, where, in a room rich with costly bindings, and smelling pleasantly of leather, and warmly yellow with the light of two shaded lamps, he would find his uncle reading before a crackling wood fire. What followed was almost a formula, an exquisite presentation of stately manners, an exquisite avoidance of any topic which might cause a real discussion. The dinner was invariably gentle, persuasive, a thoughtful gastronomic achievement. Heaven might become confused about its weather, and about wars, and things like that, but Mr. McCain never became confused about his menus. He had a habit of commending wine. "Try this claret, my dear fellow, I want your opinion. . . . A drop of this Napoleonic brandy won't hurt you a bit." He even sniffed the bouquet before each sip; passed, that is,

the glass under his nose and then drank. But Adrian, with a preconceived image of the personality back of this, and the memory of too many offences busy in his mind, saw nothing quaint or amusing. His gorge rose. Damn his uncle's wines, and his mushrooms, and his soft-footed servants, and his house of nuances and evasions, and his white grapes, large and outwardly perfect, and inwardly sentimental as the generation whose especial fruit they were. As for himself, he had a recollection of ten years of poverty after leaving college; a recollection of sweat and indignities; he had also a recollection of some poor people whom he had known.

Afterward, when the dinner was over, Adrian would go home and awake his wife, Cecil, who, with the brutal honesty of an honest woman, also some of the ungenerosity, had early in her married life flatly refused any share in the ceremonies described. Cecil would lie in her small white bed, the white of her boudoir-cap losing itself in the white of the pillow, a little sleepy and a little angrily perplexed at the perpetual jesuitical philosophy of the male. "If you feel that way," she would ask, "why do you go there, then? Why don't you banish your uncle utterly?" She asked this not without malice, her long, violet, Slavic eyes widely open, and her red mouth, a trifle too large, perhaps, a trifle cruel, fascinatingly interrogative over her white teeth. She loved Adrian and had at times, therefore, the right and desire to torture him. She knew perfectly well why he went. He was his uncle's heir, and until such time as money and other anachronisms of the present social system were done away with, there was no use throwing a fortune into the gutter, even if by your own efforts you were making an income just sufficiently large to keep up with the increased cost of living.

Sooner or later Adrian's mind reverted to Mrs. Denby. This was usually after he had been in bed and had been thinking for a while in the darkness. He could not understand Mrs. Denby. She affronted his modern habit of thought.

"The whole thing is so silly and adventitious!"

"What thing?"

Adrian was aware that his wife knew exactly of what he was talking, but he had come to expect the question. "Mrs. Denby and my uncle." He would grow rather gently cross. "It has always reminded me of those present-day sword-and-

cloak romances fat business men used to write about ten years ago and sell so enormously—there's an atmosphere of unnecessary intrigue. What's it all about? Here's the point! Why, if she felt this way about things, didn't she divorce that gentle drunkard of a husband of hers years ago and marry my uncle outright and honestly? Or why, if she couldn't get a divorce—which she could—didn't she leave her husband and go with my uncle? Anything in the open! Make a break—have some courage of her opinions! Smash things; build them up again! Thank God nowadays, at least, we have come to believe in the cleanness of surgery rather than the concealing palliatives of medicine. We're no longer—we modern people—afraid of the world; and the world can never hurt for any length of time any one who will stand up to it and tell it courageously to go to hell. No! It comes back and licks hands.

"I'll tell you why. My uncle and Mrs. Denby are the typical moral cowards of their generation. There's selfishness, too. What a travesty of love! Of course there's scandal, a perpetual scandal; but it's a hidden, sniggering scandal they don't have to meet face to face; and that's all they ask of life, they, and people like them—never to have to meet anything face to face. So long as they can bury their heads like ostriches! . . . Faugh!" There would be a moment's silence; then Adrian would complete his thought. "In my uncle's case," he would grumble in the darkness, "one phase of the selfishness is obvious. He couldn't even get himself originally, I suppose, to face the inevitable matter-of-fact moments of marriage. It began when he was middle-aged, a bachelor—I suppose he wants the sort of Don Juan, eighteen-eighty, perpetual sort of romance that doesn't exist outside the brains of himself and his like. . . . Camellias!"

Usually he tried to stir up argument with his wife, who in these matters agreed with him utterly; even more than agreed with him, since she was the escaped daughter of rich and stodgy people, and had insisted upon earning her own living by portrait-painting. Theoretically, therefore, she was, of course, an anarchist. But at moments like the present her silent assent and the aura of slight weariness over an ancient subject which emanated from her in the dusk, affronted Adrian as much as positive opposition.

"Why don't you try to understand me?"

"I do, dearest!"—a pathetic attempt at eager agreement.

"Well, then, if you do, why is the tone of your voice like that? You know by now what I think. I'm not talking convention; I believe there are no laws higher than the love of a man for a woman. It should seek expression as a seed seeks sunlight. I'm talking about honesty; bravery; a willingness to accept the consequences of one's acts and come through; about the intention to sacrifice for love just what has to be sacrificed. What's the use of it otherwise? That's one real advance the modern mind has made, anyhow, despite all the rest of the welter and uncertainty."

"Of course, dearest."

He would go on. After a while Cecil would awake guiltily and inject a fresh, almost gay interest into her sleepy voice. She was not so unfettered as not to dread the wounded esteem of the unlistened-to male. She would lean over and kiss Adrian.

"Do go to sleep, darling! What's the sense? Pretty soon your uncle will be dead—wretched old man! Then you'll never have to think of him again." Being a childless woman, her red, a trifle cruel mouth would twist itself in the darkness into a small, secretive, maternal smile.

But old Mr. Henry McCain didn't die; instead he seemed to be caught up in the condition of static good health which frequently companions entire selfishness and a careful interest in oneself. His butler died, which was very annoying. Mr. McCain seemed to consider it the breaking of a promise made fifteen or so years before. It was endlessly a trouble instructing a new man, and then, of course, there was Adlington's family to be looked after, and taxes had gone up, and Mrs. Adlington was a stout woman who, despite the fact that Adlington, while alive, had frequently interrupted Mr. McCain's breakfast newspaper reading by asserting that she was a person of no character, now insisted upon weeping noisily every time Mr. McCain granted her an interview. Also, and this was equally unexpected, since one rather thought he would go on living forever, like one of the damper sort of fungi, Mr. Denby came home from the club one rainy spring night with a slight cold and died, three days later, with extraordinary gentleness.

"My uncle," said Adrian, "is one by one losing his accessories. After a while it will be his teeth."

Cecil was perplexed. "I don't know exactly what to do," she complained. "I don't know whether to treat Mrs. Denby as a bereaved aunt, a non-existent family skeleton, or a released menace. I dare say now, pretty soon, she and your uncle will be married. Meanwhile, I suppose it is rather silly of me not to call and see if I can help her in any way. After all, we do know her intimately, whether we want to or not, don't we? We meet her about all the time, even if she wasn't motoring over to your uncle's place in the summer when we stop there."

So she went, being fundamentally kindly and fundamentally curious. She spoke of the expedition as "a descent upon Fair Rosamund's tower."

The small, yellow-panelled drawing-room, where she awaited Mrs. Denby's coming, was lit by a single silver vase-lamp under an orange shade and by a fire of thin logs, for the April evening was damp with a hesitant rain. On the table, near the lamp, was a silver vase with three yellow tulips in it, and Cecil, wandering about, came upon a double photograph frame, back of the vase, that made her gasp. She picked it up and stared at it. Between the alligator edgings, facing each other obliquely, but with the greatest amity, were Mr. Thomas Denby in the fashion of ten years before, very handsome, very well-groomed, with the startled expression which any definite withdrawal from his potational pursuits was likely to produce upon his countenance, and her uncle-in-law, Mr. Henry McCain, also in the fashion of ten years back. She was holding the photographs up to the light, her lips still apart, when she heard a sound behind her, and, putting the frame back guiltily, turned about. Mrs. Denby was advancing toward her. She seemed entirely unaware of Cecil's malfeasance; she was smiling faintly; her hand was cordial, grateful.

"You are very good," she murmured. "Sit here by the fire. We will have some tea directly."

Cecil could not but admit that she was very lovely; particularly lovely in the black of her mourning, with her slim neck, rising up from its string of pearls, to a head small and like a delicate white-and-gold flower. An extraordinarily well-bred

woman, a sort of misty Du Maurier woman, of a type that had become almost non-existent, if ever it had existed in its perfection at all. And, curiously enough, a woman whose beauty seemed to have been sharpened by many fine-drawn renunciations. Now she looked at her hands as if expecting Cecil to say something.

"I think such calls as this are always very useless, but then——"

"Exactly—but then! They mean more than anything else in the world, don't they? When one reaches fifty-five one is not always used to kindness. . . . You are very kind. . . ." She raised her eyes.

Cecil experienced a sudden impulsive warmth. "After all, what did she or any one else know about other peoples' lives? Poor souls! What a base thing life often was!"

"I want you to understand that we are always so glad, both Adrian and myself. . . . Any time we can help in any way, you know——"

"Yes, I think you would. You—I have watched you both. You don't mind, do you? I think you're both rather great people—at least, my idea of greatness."

Cecil's eyes shone just a little; then she sat back and drew together her eager, rather childish mouth. This wouldn't do! She had not come here to encourage sentimentalization. With a determined effort she lifted her mind outside the circle of commiseration which threatened to surround it. She deliberately reset the conversation to impersonal limits. She was sure that Mrs. Denby was aware of her intention, adroitly concealed as it was. This made her uncomfortable, ashamed. And yet she was irritated with herself. Why should she particularly care what this woman thought in ways as subtle as this? Obvious kindness was her intention, not mental charity pursued into tortuous by-paths. And, besides, her frank, boyish cynicism, its wariness, revolted, even while she felt herself flattered at the prospect of the confidences that seemed to tremble on Mrs. Denby's lips. It wouldn't do to "let herself in for anything"; to "give herself away." No! She adopted a manner of cool, entirely reflective kindness. But all along she was not sure that she was thoroughly successful. There was a lingering impression that Mrs. Denby was penetrating the surface to the unwilling interest beneath. Cecil

suspected that this woman was trained in discriminations and half-lights to which she and her generation had joyfully made themselves blind. She felt uncomfortably young; a little bit smiled at in the most kindly of hidden ways. Just as she was leaving, the subversive softness came close to her again, like a wave of too much perfume as you open a church-door; as if some one were trying to embrace her against her will.

"You will understand," said Mrs. Denby, "that you have done the very nicest thing in the world. I am horribly lonely. I have few women friends. Perhaps it is too much to ask—but if you could call again sometime. Yes . . . I would appreciate it so greatly."

She let go of Cecil's hand and walked to the door, and stood with one long arm raised against the curtain, her face turned toward the hall.

"There is no use," she said, "in attempting to hide my husband's life, for every one knows what it was, but then—yes, I think you will understand. I am a childless woman, you see; he was infinitely pathetic."

Cecil felt that she must run away, instantly. "I do—" she said brusquely. "I understand more than other women. Perfectly! Good-by!"

She found herself brushing past the latest trim parlour-maid, and out once more in the keen, sweet, young dampness. She strode briskly down the deserted street. Her fine bronze eyebrows were drawn down to where they met. "Good Lord! Damn!"—Cecil swore very prettily and modernly—"What rotten taste! Not frankness, whatever it might seem outwardly; not frankness, but devious excuses! Some more of Adrian's hated past-generation stuff! And yet—no! The woman was sincere—perfectly! She had meant it—that about her husband. And she *was* lovely—and she was fine, too! It was impossible to deny it. But—a childless woman! About that drunken tailor's model of a husband! And then—Uncle Henry! . . ." Cecil threw back her head; her eyes gleamed in the wet radiance of a corner lamp; she laughed without making a sound, and entirely without amusement.

But it is not true that good health is static, no matter how carefully looked after. And, despite the present revolt against the Greek spirit, Time persists in being bigotedly Greek. The tragedy—provided one lives long enough—is always

played out to its logical conclusion. For every hour you have spent, no matter how quietly or beautifully or wisely, Nemesis takes toll in the end. You peter out; the engine dulls; the shining coin wears thin. If it's only that it is all right; you are fortunate if you don't become greasy, too, or blurred, or scarred. And Mr. McCain had not spent all his hours wisely or beautifully, or even quietly, underneath the surface. He suddenly developed what he called "acute indigestion." "Odd!" he complained, "and exceedingly tiresome! I've been able to eat like an ostrich all my life." Adrian smiled covertly at the simile, but his uncle was unaware that it was because in Adrian's mind the simile applied to his uncle's conscience, not his stomach.

It *was* an odd disease, that "acute indigestion." It manifested itself by an abrupt tragic stare in Mr. McCain's eyes, a whiteness of cheek, a clutching at the left side of the breast; it resulted also in his beginning to walk very slowly indeed. One day Adrian met Carron, his uncle's physician, as he was leaving a club after luncheon. Carron stopped him. "Look here, Adrian," he said, "is that new man of your uncle's—that valet, or whatever he is—a good man?"

Adrian smiled. "I didn't hire him," he answered, "and I couldn't discharge him if I wanted—in fact, any suggestion of that kind on my part, would lead to his employment for life. Why?"

"Because," said Carron, "he impresses me as being rather young and flighty, and some day your uncle is going to die suddenly. He may last five years; he may snuff out to-morrow. It's his heart." His lips twisted pityingly. "He prefers to call it by some other name," he added, "and he would never send for me again if he knew I had told you, but you ought to know. He's a game old cock, isn't he?"

"Oh, very!" agreed Adrian. "Yes, game! Very, indeed!"

He walked slowly down the sunlit courtway on which the back door of the club opened, swinging his stick and meditating. Spring was approaching its zenith. In the warm May afternoon pigeons tumbled about near-by church spires which cut brown inlays into the soft blue sky. There was a feeling of open windows; a sense of unseen tulips and hyacinths; of people playing pianos. . . . Too bad, an old man dying that way, his hand furtively seeking his heart, when all this

spring was about! Terror in possession of him, too! People like that hated to die; they couldn't see anything ahead. Well, Adrian reflected, the real tragedy of it hadn't been his fault. He had always been ready at the slightest signal to forget almost everything—yes, almost everything. Even that time when, as a sweating newspaper reporter, he had, one dusk, watched in the park his uncle and Mrs. Denby drive past in the cool seclusion of a shining victoria. Curious! In itself the incident was small, but it had stuck in his memory more than others far more serious, as concrete instances are likely to do. . . . No, he wasn't sorry; not a bit! He was glad, despite the hesitation he experienced in saying to himself the final word. He had done his best, and this would mean his own release and Cecil's. It would mean at last the blessed feeling that he could actually afford a holiday, and a little unthinking laughter, and, at thirty-nine, the dreams for which, at twenty-five, he had never had full time. He walked on down the courtway more briskly.

That Saturday night was the night he dined with his uncle. It had turned very warm; unusually warm for the time of year. When he had dressed and had sought out Cecil to say good-by to her he found her by the big studio window on the top floor of the apartment where they lived. She was sitting in the window-seat, her chin cupped in her hand, looking out over the city, in the dark pool of which lights were beginning to open like yellow water-lilies. Her white arm gleamed in the gathering dusk, and she was dressed in some diaphanous blue stuff that enhanced the bronze of her hair. Adrian took his place silently beside her and leaned out. The air was very soft and hot and embracing, and up here it was very quiet, as if one floated above the lower clouds of perpetual sound.

Cecil spoke at last. "It's lovely, isn't it?" she said. "I should have come to find you, but I couldn't. These first warm nights! You really understand why people live, after all, don't you? It's like a pulse coming back to a hand you love." She was silent a moment. "Kiss me," she said, finally. "I—I'm so glad I love you, and we're young."

He stooped down and put his arms about her. He could feel her tremble. How fragrant she was, and queer, and mysterious, even if he had lived with her now for almost fifteen years! He was infinitely glad at the moment for Lis

entire life. He kissed her again, kissed her eyes, and she went down the stairs with him to the hall-door. She was to stop for him at his uncle's, after a dinner to which she was going.

Adrian lit a cigarette and walked instead of taking the elevator. It was appropriate to his mood that on the second floor some one with a golden Italian voice should be singing "Louise." He paused for a moment. He was reminded of a night long ago in Verona, when there had been an open window and moonlight in the street. Then he looked at his watch. He was late; he would have to hurry. It amused him that at his age he should still fear the silent rebuke with which his uncle punished unpunctuality.

He arrived at his destination as a near-by church clock struck the half-hour. The new butler admitted him and led him back to where his uncle was sitting by an open window; the curtains stirred in the languid breeze, the suave room was a little penetrated by the night, as if some sly, disorderly spirit was investigating uninvited. It was far too hot for the wood fire—that part of the formula had been omitted, but otherwise each detail was the same. "The two hundredth time!" Adrian thought to himself. "The two hundredth time, at least! It will go on forever!" And then the formula was altered again, for his uncle got to his feet, laying aside the evening paper with his usual precise care. "My dear fellow," he began, "so good of you! On the minute, too! I——" and then he stumbled and put out his hand. "My glasses!" he said.

Adrian caught him and held him upright. He swayed a little. "I—— Lately I have had to use them sometimes, even when not reading," he murmured. "Thank you! Thank you!"

Adrian went back to the chair where his uncle had been sitting. He found the glasses—gold pince-nez—but they were broken neatly in the middle, lying on the floor, as if they had dropped from someone's hand. He looked at them for a moment, puzzled, before he gave them back to his uncle.

"Here they are, sir," he said. "But—it's very curious. They're broken in such an odd way."

His uncle peered down at them. He hesitated and cleared his throat. "Yes," he began; then he stood up straight, with an unexpected twist of his shoulders. "I was turning them between my fingers," he said, "just before you came in. I

had no idea—no, no idea! Shall we go in? I think dinner has been announced.”

There was the sherry in the little, deeply cut glasses, and the clear soup, with a dash of lemon in it, and the fish, and afterward the roast chicken, with vegetables discreetly limited and designed not to detract from the main dish; and there was a pint of champagne for Adrian and a mild white wine for his uncle. The latter twisted his mouth in a dry smile. “One finds it difficult to get old,” he said. “I have always been very fond of champagne. More aesthetically I think than the actual taste. It seems to sum up so well the evening mood—dinner and laughter and forgetting the day. But now——” he flicked contemptuously the stem of his glass—“I am only allowed this uninspired stuff.” He stopped suddenly and his face twisted into the slight grimace which Adrian in the last few weeks had been permitted occasionally to see. His hand began to wander vaguely over the white expanse of his shirt.

Adrian pushed back his chair. “Let me—!” he began, but his uncle waved a deprecating hand. “Sit down!” he managed to say. “Please!” Adrian sank back again. The colour returned to his uncle’s cheeks and the staring question left his eyes. He took a sip of wine.

“I cannot tell you,” he observed with elaborate indifference, “how humiliating this thing is becoming to me. I have always had a theory that invalids and people when they begin to get old and infirm, should be put away some place where they can undergo the unpleasant struggle alone. It’s purely selfish—there’s something about the sanctity of the individual. Dogs have it right—you know the way they creep off? But I suppose I won’t. Pride fails when the body weakens, doesn’t it, no matter what the will may be?” He lifted his wine-glass. “I am afraid I am giving you a very dull evening, my dear fellow,” he apologized. “Forgive me! We will talk of more pleasant things. I drink wine with you! How is Cecil? Doing well with her painting?”

Adrian attempted to relax his own inner grimness. He responded to his uncle’s toast. But he wished this old man, so very near the mysterious crisis of his affairs, would begin to forego to some extent the habit of a lifetime, become a little more human. This ridiculous “façade”! The dinner progressed.

Through an open window the night, full of soft, distant sound, made itself felt once more. The candles, under their red shades, flickered at intervals. The noiseless butler came and went. How old his uncle was getting to look, Adrian reflected. There was a grayness about his cheeks; fine, wire-like lines about his mouth. And he was falling into that sure sign of age, a vacant absent-mindedness. Half the time he was not listening to what he, Adrian, was saying; instead, his eyes sought constantly the shadows over the carved sideboard across the table from him. What did he see there? What question was he asking? Adrian wondered. Only once was his uncle very much interested, and that was when Adrian had spoken of the war and the psychology left in its train. Adrian himself had not long before been released from a weary round of training-camps, where, in Texas dust, or the unpleasant resinous summer of the South, he had gone through a repetition that in the end had threatened to render him an imbecile. He was not illusioned. As separate personalities, men had lost much of their glamour for him; there had been too much sweat, too much crowding, too much invasion of dignity, of everything for which the world claimed it had been struggling and praying. But alongside of this revolt on his part had grown up an immense pity and belief in humanity as a mass—struggling, worm-like, aspiring, idiotic, heroic. The thought of it made him uncomfortable and at the same time elate.

His uncle shook a dissenting head. On this subject he permitted himself mild discussion, but his voice was still that of an old, wearied man, annoyed and bewildered. "Oh, no!" he said. "That's the very feature of it that seems to me most dreadful; the vermicular aspect; the massed uprising; the massed death. About professional armies there was something decent—about professional killing. It was cold-blooded and keen, anyway. But this modern war, and this modern craze for self-revelation! Naked! Why, these books—the young men kept their fingers on the pulses of their reactions. It isn't clean; it makes the individual cheap. War is a dreadful thing; it should be as hidden as murder." He sat back, smiled. "We seem to have a persistent tendency to become serious to-night," he remarked.

Serious! Adrian saw a vision of the drill-grounds, and

smiled sardonically; then he raised his head in surprise, for the new butler had broken all the rules of the household and was summoning his uncle to the telephone in the midst of dessert. He awaited the expected rebuke, but it did not come. Instead, his uncle paused in the middle of a sentence, stared, and looked up. "Ah, yes!" he said, and arose from his chair. "Forgive me, Adrian, I will be back shortly." He walked with a new, just noticeable, infirmness toward the door. Once there he seemed to think an apology necessary, for he turned and spoke with absent-minded courtesy.

"You may not have heard," he said, "but Mrs. Denby is seriously ill. Her nurse gives me constant bulletins over the telephone."

Adrian started to his feet, then sat down again. "But—" he stuttered—"but —is it as bad as all that?"

"I am afraid," said his uncle gently, "it could not be worse." The curtain fell behind him.

Adrian picked up his fork and began to stir gently the melting ice on the plate before him, but his eyes were fixed on the wall opposite, where, across the shining table, from a mellow gold frame, a portrait of his grandfather smiled with a benignity, utterly belying his traditional character, into the shadows above the candles. But Adrian was not thinking of his grandfather just then, he was thinking of his uncle—and Mrs. Denby. What in the world——! Dangerously ill, and yet here had been his uncle able to go through with—not entirely calmly, to be sure; Adrian remembered the lack of attention, the broken eye-glasses; and yet, still able to go through with, not obviously shaken, this monthly farce; this dinner that in reality mocked all the real meaning of blood-relationship. Good Lord! To Adrian's modern mind, impatient and courageous, the situation was preposterous, grotesque. He himself would have broken through to the woman he loved, were she seriously ill, if all the city was cordoned to keep him back. What could it mean? Entire selfishness on his uncle's part? Surely not that! That was too inhuman! Adrian was willing to grant his uncle exceptional expertness in the art of self-protection, but there was a limit even to self-protection. There must be some other reason. Discretion? More likely, and yet how absurd! Had Mr. Denby been alive, a meticulous, a fantastic delicacy might

have intervened, but Mr. Denby was dead. Who were there to wound, or who left for the telling of tales? A doctor and the servants. This was not altogether reasonable, despite what he knew of his uncle. Here was some oddity of psychology he could not follow. He heard the curtains stir as his uncle reëntered. He looked up, attentive and curious, but his uncle's face was the mask to which he was accustomed.

"How is Mrs. Denby?" he asked.

Mr. McCain hesitated for the fraction of a second. "I am afraid, very ill," he said. "Very ill, indeed! It is pneumonia. I—the doctor thinks it is only a question of a little time, but—well, I shall continue to hope for the best." There was a metallic harshness to his concluding words. "Shall we go into the library?" he continued. "I think the coffee will be pleasanter there."

They talked again of the war; of revolution; of the dark forces at large in the world.

Through that hour or two Adrian had a nakedness of perception unusual even to his sensitive mind. It seemed to him three spirits were abroad in the quiet, softly-lit, book-lined room; three intentions that crept up to him like the waves of the sea, receded, crept back again; or were they currents of air? or hesitant, unheard feet that advanced and withdrew? In at the open windows poured at times the warm, enveloping scent of the spring; pervading, easily overlooked, lawless, persistent, inevitable. Adrian found himself thinking it was like the presence of a woman. And then, overlapping this, would come the careful, dry, sardonic tones of his uncle's voice, as if insisting that the world was an ordinary world, and that nothing, not even love or death, could lay disrespectful fingers upon or hurry for a moment the trained haughtiness of the will. Yet even this compelling arrogance was at times overtaken, submerged, by a third presence, stronger even than the other two; a presence that entered upon the heels of the night; the ceaseless murmur of the streets; the purring of rubber tires upon asphalt; a girl's laugh, high, careless, reckless. Life went on. Never for a moment did it stop.

"I am not sorry that I am getting old," said Mr. McCain. "I think nowadays is an excellent time to die. Perhaps for

the very young, the strong—but for me, things are too busy, too hurried. I have always liked my life like potpourri. I liked to keep it in a china jar and occasionally take off the lid. Otherwise one's sense of perfume becomes satiated. Take your young girls; they remain faithful to a love that is not worth being faithful to—all noise, and flushed laughter, and open doors." Quite unexpectedly he began to talk in a way he had never talked before. He held his cigar in his hand until the ash turned cold; his fingers trembled just a little.

"You have been very good to me," he said. Adrian raised startled eyes. "Very good. I am quite aware that you dislike me"—he hesitated and the ghost of a smile hovered about his lips—"and I have always disliked you. Please!" He raised a silencing hand. "You don't mind my saying so? No. Very well, then, there is something I want to tell you. Afterward I will never mention it again. I dare say our mutual dislike is due to the inevitable misunderstanding that exists between the generations. But it is not important. The point is that we have always been well-bred toward each other. Yes, that is the point. You have always been a gentleman, very considerate, very courteous, I cannot but admire you. And I think you will find I have done the best I could. I am not a rich man, as such things go nowadays, but I will hand you on the money that will be yours quite unimpaired, possibly added to. I feel very strongly on that subject. I am old-fashioned enough to consider the family the most important thing in life. After all, we are the only two McCains left." He hesitated again, and twisted for a moment his bloodless hands in his lap, then he raised his eyes and spoke with a curious hurried embarrassment. "I have sacrificed a great deal for that," he said. "Yes, a great deal."

The soft-footed butler stood at his elbow, like an actor in comedy suddenly cast for the rôle of a portentous messenger.

"Miss Niles is calling you again, sir," he said.

"On, yes!—ah—Adrian, I am very sorry, my dear fellow. I will finish the conversation when I come back."

This time the telephone was within earshot; in the hall outside. Adrian heard his uncle's slow steps end in the creaking of a chair as he sat down; then the picking up of the receiver. The message was a long one, for his uncle did not speak for

fully a minute; finally his voice drifted in through the curtained doorway.

"You think . . . only a few minutes?"

". . . Ah, yes! Conscious? Yes. Well, will you tell her, Miss Niles?—yes, please listen very carefully—tell her this. That I am not there because I dared not come. Yes; on her account. She will understand. My heart—it's my heart. She will understand. I did not dare. For her sake, not mine. Tell her that. She will understand. Please be very careful in repeating the message, Miss Niles. Tell her I dared not come because of my heart. . . . Yes; thank you. That's it. . . . What? Yes, I will wait, Miss Niles."

Adrian, sitting in the library, suddenly got to his feet and crossed to the empty fireplace and stood with his back to it, enlightenment and a puzzled frown struggling for possession of his face. His uncle's heart! Ah, he understood, then! It was discretion, after all, but not the kind he thought—a much more forgiveable discretion. And, yet, what possible difference could it make should his uncle die suddenly in Mrs. Denby's house? Fall dead across her bed, or die kneeling beside it? Poor, twisted old fool, afraid even at the end that death might catch him out; afraid of a final undignified gesture.

A motor blew its horn for the street crossing. Another girl laughed; a young, thin, excited girl, to judge by her laughter. The curtains stirred and again there was that underlying scent of tulips and hyacinths; and then, from the hall outside, came the muffled thud of a receiver falling to the floor. Adrian waited. The receiver was not picked up. He strode to the door. Crumpled up over the telephone was old Mr. McCain.

Cecil came later. She was very quick and helpful, and jealously solicitous on Adrian's account, but in the taxicab going home she said the one thing Adrian had hoped she wouldn't say, and yet was sure she would. She belonged to a sex which, if it is honest at all, is never reticently so. She believed that between the man she loved and herself there were no possible mental withdrawals. "It is very tragic," she said. "but much better—you know it is better. He belonged to the cumberers of the earth. Yes, so much better; and this way, too!"

In the darkness her hand sought his. Adrian took it, but in his heart was the same choked feeling, the same knowledge that something was gone that could not be found again, that, as a little boy, he had had when they sold, at his father's death, the country place where he had spent his summers. Often he had lain awake at night, restless with the memory of heliotrope, and phlox, and mignonette, and afternoons quiet except for the sound of bees.

"CONTACT!"

By FRANCES NOYES HART*

From The Pictorial Review

THE first time she heard it was in the silk-hung and flower-scented peace of the little drawing-room in Curzon Street. His sister Rosemary had wanted to come up to London to get some clothes—Victory clothes they called them in those first joyous months after the armistice, and decked their bodies in scarlet and silver, even when their poor hearts went in black—and Janet had been urged to leave her own drab boarding-house room to stay with the forlorn small butterfly. They had struggled through dinner somehow, and Janet had finished her coffee and turned the great chair so that she could watch the dancing fire (it was cool for May), her cloudy brown head tilted back against the rose-red cushion, shadowy eyes half closed, idle hands linked across her knees. She looked every one of her thirty years—and mortally tired—and careless of both facts. But she managed an encouraging smile at the sound of Rosemary's shy, friendly voice at her elbow. "Janet, these are yours, aren't they? Mummy found them with some things last week, and I thought that you might like to have them."

She drew a quick breath at the sight of the shabby packet.

"Why, yes," she said evenly. "That's good of you, Rosemary. Thanks a lot."

"That's all right," murmured Rosemary diffidently. "Wouldn't you like something to read? There's a most frightfully exciting Western novel——"

The smile took on a slightly ironical edge. "Don't bother about me, my dear. You see, I come from that frightfully exciting West, and I know all about the pet rattlesnakes and

*Frances Newbold Noyes, in *Pictorial Review* for December, 1920.

the wildly Bohemian cowboys. Run along and play with your book—I'll be off to bed in a few minutes."

Rosemary retired obediently to the deep chair in the corner, and with the smile gone but the irony still hovering, she slipped the cord off the packet. A meager and sorry enough array—words had never been for her the swift, docile servitors that most people found them. But the thin gray sheet in her fingers started out gallantly enough—"Beloved." Beloved! She leaned far forward, dropping it with deft precision into the glowing pocket of embers. What next? This was more like—it began "Dear Captain Langdon" in the small, contained, even writing that was her pride, and it went on soberly enough, "I shall be glad to have tea with you next Friday—not Thursday, because I must be at the hut then. It was stupid of me to have forgotten you—next time I will try to do better." Well, she had done better the next time. She had not forgotten him again—never, never again. That had been her first letter; how absurd of Jerry, the magnificently careless, to have treasured it all that time, the miserable, stilted little thing! She touched it with curious fingers. Surely, surely he must have cared, to have cared so much for that!

It seemed incredible that she hadn't remembered him at once when he came into the hut that second time. Of course she had only seen him for a moment and six months had passed—but he was so absurdly vivid, every inch of him, from the top of his shining, dark head to the heels of his shining, dark boots—and there were a great many inches! How could she have forgotten, even for a minute, those eyes dancing like blue fire in the brown young face, the swift, disarming charm of his smile, and, above all, his voice—how, in the name of absurdity could any one who had once heard it ever forget Jeremy Langdon's voice? Even now she had only to close her eyes, and it rang out again, with its clipped, British accent and its caressing magic, as un-English as any Provençal troubadour's! And yet she had forgotten—he had had to speak twice before she had even lifted her head.

"Miss America—oh, I say, she's forgotten me, and I thought that I'd made such an everlasting impression!" The delighted amazement reached even her tired ears, and she had smiled wanly as she pushed the pile of coppers nearer to him.

"Have you been in before? It's stupid of me, but there are

such hundreds of thousands of you, and you are gone in a minute, you see. That's your change, I think.”

“Hundreds of thousands of me, hey?” He had leaned across the counter, his face alight with mirth. “I wish to the Lord my angel mother could hear you—it's what I'm forever tellin' her, though just between us, it's stuff and nonsense. I've got a well-founded suspicion that I'm absolutely unique. You wait and see!”

And she had waited—and she had seen! She stirred a little, dropped the note into the flames, and turned to the next, the quiet, mocking mouth suddenly tortured and rebellious.

“No, you must be mad,” it ran, the trim writing strangely shaken. “How often have you seen me—five times? Do you know how old I am. How hard and tired and useless? No—no a thousand times. In a little while we will wake up and find that we were dreaming.”

That had brought him to her swifter than Fate, triumphant mischief in every line of his exultant face. “Just let those damned old cups slip from your palsied fingers, will you? I'm goin' to take your honourable age for a little country air—it may keep you out of the grave for a few days longer. Never can tell! No use your scowlin' like that—the car's outside, and the big chief says to be off with you. Says you have no more colour than a banshee, and not half the life—can't grasp the fact that it's just chronic antiquity. Fasten the collar about your throat—no, higher! Darlin', darlin', think of havin' a whole rippin' day to ourselves. You're glad, too, aren't you, my little stubborn saint?”

Oh, that joyous and heart-breaking voice, running on and on—it made all the other voices that she had ever heard seem colourless and unreal——

“Darlin' idiot, what do I care how old you are? Thirty, hey? Almost old enough to be an ancestor! Look at me—no, look at me! Dare you to say that you aren't mad about me!”

Mad about him—mad, mad! She lifted her hands to her ears, but she could no more shut out the exultant voice now than she could on that windy afternoon.

“Other fellow got tired of you, did he? Good luck for us, what? You're a fearfully tiresome person, darlin'. It's goin' to take me nine-tenths of eternity to tell you how tiresome you

are. Give a chap a chance, won't you? The tiresomest thing about you is the way you leash up that dimple of yours. No, by George, there it is! Janie, look at me——"

She touched the place where the leashed dimple had hidden with a delicate and wondering finger—of all Jerry's gifts to her the most miraculous had been that small fugitive. Exiled now, forever and forever.

"Are you comin' down to White Orchards next week-end? I'm off for France on the twelfth and you've simply got to meet my people. You'll be insane about 'em—Rosemary's the most beguilin' flibbertigibbet, and I can't wait to see you bein' a kind of an elderly grandmother to her. What a bewitchin' little grandmother you're goin' to be one of these days——"

Oh, Jerry! Oh, Jerry, Jerry! She twisted in her chair, her face suddenly a small mask of incredulous terror. No, no, it wasn't true, it wasn't true—never—never—never! And then, for the first time, she heard it. Far off but clear, a fine and vibrant humming, the distant music of wings! The faint, steady pulsing was drawing nearer and nearer—nearer still—it must be flying quite high. The hateful letters scattered about her as she sprang to the open window—no, it was too high to see, and too dark, though the sky was powdered with stars—but she could hear it clearly, hovering and throbbing like some gigantic bird. It must be almost directly over her head, if she could only see it.

"It sounds—it sounds the way a humming-bird would look through a telescope," she said half aloud, and Rosemary murmured sleepily but courteously, "What, Janet?"

"Just an airplane—no, gone now. It sounded like a bird. Didn't you hear it?"

"No," replied Rosemary drowsily. "We get so used to the old things that we don't even notice them any more. Queer time to be flying!"

"It sounded rather—beautiful," said Janet, her face still turned to the stars. "Far off, but so clear and sure. I wonder—I wonder whether it will be coming back?"

Well, it came back. She went down to White Orchards with Rosemary for the following week-end, and after she had smoothed her hair and given a scornful glance at the pale face

in the mirror, with its shadowy eyes and defiant mouth, she slipped out to the lower terrace for a breath of the soft country air. Halfway down the flight of steps she stumbled and caught at the balustrade, and stood shaking for a moment, her face pressed against its rough surface. Once before—once before she had stumbled on those steps, but it was not the balustrade that had saved her. She could feel his arms about her now, holding her up, holding her close and safe. The magical voice was in her ears. "Let you go? I'll never let you go! Poor little feet, stumblin' in the dark, what would you do without Jerry? Time's comin', you cheeky little devils, when you'll come runnin' to him when he whistles! No use tryin' to get away—you belong to him."

Oh, whistle to them now, Jerry—they would run to you across the stars!

"How'd you like to marry me before I go back to-morrow? No? No accountin' for tastes, Miss Abbott—lots of people would simply jump at it! All right—April, then. Birds and flowers and all that kind o' thing—pretty intoxicatin', what? No, keep still, darlin' goose. What feller taught you to wear a dress that looks like roses and smells like roses and feels like roses? This feller? Lord help us, what a lovely liar!"

And suddenly she found herself weeping helplessly, desperately, like an exhausted child, shaken to the heart at the memory of the rose-coloured dress.

"You like me just a bit, don't you, funny, quiet little thing? But you'd never lift a finger to hold me—that's the wonder of you—that's why I'll never leave you. No, not for heaven. You can't lose me—no use tryin'."

But she had lost you, Jerry—you had left her, for all your promises, to terrified weeping in the hushed loveliness of the terrace, where your voice had turned her still heart to a dancing star, where your fingers had touched her quiet blood to flowers and flames and butterflies. She had believed you then—what would she ever believe again? And then she caught back the despairing sobs swiftly, for once more she heard, far off, the rushing of wings. Nearer—nearer—humming and singing and hovering in the quiet dusk. Why, it was over the garden! She flung back her head, suddenly eager to see it; it was a friendly and thrilling sound in all that stillness. Oh, it was coming lower—lower still—she could

hear the throb of the propellers clearly. Where *was* it? Behind those trees, perhaps? She raced up the flight of steps, dashing the treacherous tears from her eyes, straining up on impatient tiptoes. Surely she could see it now! But already it was growing fainter—drifting steadily away, the distant hum growing lighter and lighter—lighter still——

“Janet!” called Mrs. Langdon’s pretty, patient voice. “Dinner-time, dear! Is there any one with you?”

“No one at all, Mrs. Langdon. I was just listening to an airplane.”

“An *airplane*? Oh, no, dear—they never pass this way any more. The last one was in October, I think——”

The soft, plaintive voice trailed off in the direction of the dining-room and Janet followed it, a small, secure smile touching her lips. The last one had not passed in October. It had passed a few minutes before, over the lower garden.

She quite forgot it by the next week—she was becoming an adept at forgetting. That was all that was left for her to do! Day after day and night after night she had raised the drawbridge between her heart and memory, leaving the lonely thoughts to shiver desolately on the other side of the moat. She was weary to the bone of suffering, and they were enemies, for all their dear and friendly guise; they would tear her to pieces if she ever let them in. No, no, she was done with them. She would forget, as Jerry had forgotten. She would destroy every link between herself and the past—and pack the neat little steamer trunk neatly—and bid these kind and gentle people good-by—and take herself and her bitterness and her dullness back to the class-room in the Western university town—back to the Romance languages. The Romance languages!

She would finish it all that night, and leave as soon as possible. There were some trinkets to destroy, and his letters from France to burn—she would give Rosemary the rose-coloured dress—foolish, lovely little Rosemary, whom he had loved, and who was lying now fast asleep in the next room curled up like a kitten in the middle of the great bed, her honey-coloured hair falling about her in a shining mist. She swept back her own cloud of hair resolutely, frowning at the candle-lit reflection in the mirror. Two desolate pools in the

small, pale oval of her face stared back at her—two pools with something drowned in their lonely depths. Well, she would drown it deeper!

The letters first; how lucky that they still used candle-light! It would make the task much simpler—the funeral pyre already lighted. She moved one of the tall candelabra to the desk, sitting for a long time quite still, her chin cupped in her hands, staring down at the bits of paper. She could smell the wall-flowers under the window as though they were in the room—drenched in dew and moonlight, they were reckless of their fragrance. All this peace and cleanliness and orderly beauty—what a ghastly trick for God to have played—to have taught her to adore them, and then to snatch them away! All about her, warm with candle-light, lay the gracious loveliness of the little room with its dark waxed furniture, its bright glazed chintz, its narrow bed with the cool linen sheets smelling of lavender, and its straight, patterned curtains—oh, that hateful, mustard-coloured den at home, with its golden-oak day-bed!

She wrung her hands suddenly in a little hunted gesture. How could he have left her to that, he who had sworn that he would never leave her? In every one of those letters beneath her linked fingers he had sworn it—in every one perjured—false half a hundred times. Pick up any one of them at random——

"Janie, you darling stick, is 'dear Jerry' the best that you can do? You ought to learn French! I took a perfectly ripping French kid out to dinner last night—name's Liane, from the Varietés—and she was calling me '*mon grand cheri*' before the salad, and '*mon p'tit amour*' before the green mint. Maybe *that'll* buck you up! And I'd have you know that she's so pretty that it's ridiculous, with black velvet hair that she wears like a little Oriental turban, and eyes like golden pansies, and a mouth between a kiss and a prayer—and a nice affable nature into the bargain. But I'm a ghastly jackass—I didn't get any fun out of it at all—because I really didn't even see her. Under the pink shaded candles to my blind eyes it seemed that there was seated the coolest, quietest, whitest little thing, with eyes that were as indifferent as my velvety Liane's were kind, and mockery in her smile. Oh, little masquerader! If I could get my arms about you even for a min-

ute—if I could kiss so much as the tips of your lashes—would you be cool and quiet and mocking then? Janie, Janie, rosy-red as flowers on the terrace and sweeter—sweeter—they're about you now—they'll be about you always!"

Burn it fast, candle—faster, faster. Here's another for you.

"So the other fellow cured you of using pretty names, did he—you don't care much for dear and darling any more? Bit hard on me, but fortunately for you, Janie Janet, I'm rather a dab at languages—'specially when it comes to what the late lamented Boche referred to as 'cosy names.' *Querida mi alma*, *douchka*, *Herzliebchen*, *carissima*; and *bien*, *bien-aimée*, I'll not run out of salutations for you this side of heaven—no—nor t'other. I adore the serene grace with which you ignore the ravishing Liane. Haven't you any curiosity at all, my Sphinx? No? Well, then, just to punish you, I'll tell you all about it. She's married to the best fellow in the world—a *liaison* officer working with our squadron—and she worships the ground that he walks on and the air that he occasionally flies in. So whenever I run up to the City of Light, *en permission*, I look her up, and take her the latest news—and for an hour, over the candles, we pretend that I am Philippe, and that she is Janie. Only she says that I don't pretend very well—and it's just possible that she's right.

"*Mon petit cœur et grand trésor*, I wish that I could take you flying with me this evening. You'd be daft about it! Lots of it's a rotten bore, of course, but there's something in me that doesn't live at all when I'm on this too, too solid earth. Something that lies there, crouched and dormant, waiting until I've climbed up into the seat, and buckled the strap about me and laid my hands on the 'stick.' It's waiting—waiting for a word—and so am I. And I lean far forward, watching the figure toiling out beyond till the call comes back to me, clear and confident, 'Contact, sir?' And I shout back, as restless and exultant as the first time that I answered it—'Contact!'

"And I'm off—and I'm alive—and I'm free! Ho, Janie! That's simpler than Abracadabra or Open Sesame, isn't it? But it opens doors more magical than ever they swung wide, and something in me bounds through, more swift and eager than any Aladdin. Free! I'm a crazy sort of a beggar, my

little love—that same thing in me hungers and thirsts and aches for freedom. I go half mad when people or events try to hold me—you, wise beyond wisdom, never will. Somehow, between us, we've struck the spark that turns a mere piece of machinery into a wonder with wings—somehow, you are forever setting me free. It is your voice—your voice of silver and peace—that's eternally whispering 'Contact!' to me—and I am released, heart, soul, and body! And because you speed me on my way, Janie, I'll never fly so far, I'll never fly so long, I'll never fly so high that I'll not return to you. You hold me fast, forever and forever."

You had flown high and far indeed, Jerry—and you had not returned. Forever and forever! Burn faster, flame!

"My blessed child, who's been frightening you? Airplanes are by all odds safer than taxis—and no end safer than the infernal duffer who's been chaffing you would be if I could once get my hands on him. Damn fool! Don't care if you do hate swearing—damn fools are damn fools, and there's an end to it. All those statistics are sheer melodramatic rot—the chap who fired 'em at you probably has all his money invested in submarines, and is fairly delirious with jealousy. Peg (did I ever formally introduce you to Pegasus, the best pursuit-plane in the R. F. C.—or out of it?)—Peg's about as likely to let me down as you are! We'd do a good deal for each other, she and I—nobody else can really fly her, the darling! But she'd go to the stars for me—and farther still. Never you fear—we have charmed lives, Peg and I—we belong to Janie.

"I think that people make an idiotic row about dying, anyway. It's probably jolly good fun—and I can't see what difference a few years here would make if you're going to have all eternity to play with. Of course you're a ghastly little heathen, and I can see you wagging a mournful head over this already—but every time that I remember what a shocking sell the After Life (exquisite phrase!) is going to be for you, darling, I do a bit of head-wagging myself—and it's not precisely mournful! I can't wait to see your blank consternation—and you needn't expect any sympathy from *me*. My very first words will be, 'I told you so!' Maybe I'll rap them out to you with a table-leg!

"What do you think of all this Ouija Planchette rumpus,

anyway? I can't for the life of me see why any one with a whole new world to explore should hang around chattering with this one. I know that I'd be half mad with excitement to get at the new job, and that I'd find re-assuring the loved ones (exquisite phrase number two) a hideous bore. Still, I can see that it would be nice from their selfish point of view! Well, I'm no ghost yet, thank God—nor yet are you—but if ever I am one, I'll show you what devotion really is. I'll come all the way back from heaven to play with foolish Janie, who doesn't believe that there is one to come from. To foolish, foolish Janie, who still will be dearer than the prettiest angel of them all, no matter how alluringly her halo may be tilted or her wings ruffled. To Janie who, Heaven forgive him, will be all that one poor ghost has ever loved!"

Had there come to him, the radiant and the confident, a moment of terrible and shattering surprise—a moment when he realized that there were no pretty angels with shining wings waiting to greet him—a moment when he saw before him only the overwhelming darkness, blacker and deeper than the night would be, when she blew out the little hungry flame that was eating up the sheet that held his laughter? Oh, gladly would she have died a thousand deaths to have spared him that moment!

"My little Greatheart, did you think that I did not know how brave you are? You are the truest soldier of us all, and I, who am not much given to worship, am on my knees before that shy gallantry of yours, which makes what courage we poor duffers have seem a vain and boastful thing. When I see you as I saw you last, small and white and clear and brave, I can't think of anything but the first crocuses at White Orchards, shining out, demure and valiant, fearless of wind and storm and cold—fearless of Fear itself. You see, you're so very, very brave that you make me ashamed to be afraid of poetry and sentiment and pretty words—things of which I have a good, thumping Anglo-Saxon terror, I can tell you! It's because I know what a heavenly brick you are that I could have killed that statistical jackass for bothering you; but I'll forgive him, since you say that it's all right. And so ghosts are the only things in the world that frighten you—even though you know that there aren't any. You and Madame de Staël, hey? 'I do not believe in ghosts, but I

fear them!' It's pretty painful to learn that the mere sight of one would turn you into a gibbering lunatic. Nice sell for an enthusiastic spirit who'd romped clear back from heaven to give you a pleasant surprise—I *don't* think! Well, no fear, young Janie—I'll find some way if I'm put to it—some nice, safe, pretty way that wouldn't scare a neurasthenic baby, let alone the dauntless Miss Abbott. I'll find——"

Oh, no more of that—no more! She crushed the sheet in her hands fiercely, crumpling it into a little ball—the candle-flame was too slow. No, she couldn't stand it—she couldn't—she couldn't, and there was an end to it. She would go raving mad—she would kill herself—she would—— She lifted her head, wrenched suddenly back from that chaos of despair, alert and intent. There it was again, coming swiftly nearer and nearer from some immeasurable distance—down—down—nearer still—the very room was humming and throbbing with it—she could almost hear the singing in the wires. She swung far out over the window edge, searching the moon-drenched garden with eager eyes—surely, surely it would never fly so low unless it were about to land! Engine trouble, perhaps—though she could detect no break in the huge, rhythmic pulsing that was shaking the night. Still——

"Rosemary!" she called urgently. "Rosemary—listen—is there a place where it can land?"

"Where what can land?" asked a drowsy voice.

"An airplane. It's flying so low that it must be in some kind of trouble—do come and see!"

Rosemary came pattering obediently toward her, a small, docile figure, dark eyes misted with dreams, wide with amazement.

"I must be nine-tenths asleep," she murmured gently. "Because I don't hear a single thing, Janet. Perhaps——"

"Hush—listen!" begged Janet, raising an imperative hand—and then her own eyes widened. "Why—it's *gone*!" There was a note of flat incredulity in her voice. "Heavens, how those things must eat up space! Not a minute ago it was fairly shaking this room, and now——"

Rosemary stifled a small pink yawn and smiled ingratiatingly.

"Perhaps you were asleep too," she suggested humbly.

"I don't believe that airplanes ever fly this way any more. Or it might have been that fat Hodges boy on his motorcycle—he does make the most dreadful racket. Oh, Janet, what a perfectly *ripping* night—do see!"

They leaned together on the window-sill, silenced by the white and shining beauty that had turned the pleasant garden into a place of magic and enchantment. The corners of Janet's mouth lifted suddenly. How absurd people were! The fat Hodges boy and his motorcycle! Did they all regard her as an amiable lunatic—even little, lovely, friendly Rosemary, wavering sleepily at her side? It really was maddening. But she felt, amazingly enough, suddenly quiet and joyous and indifferent—and passionately glad that the wanderer from the skies had won safely through and was speeding home. Home! Oh, it was a crying pity that it need ever land—anything so fleet and strong and sure should fly forever! But if they must rest, those beating wings—the old R. F. C. toast went singing through her head and she flung it out into the moonlight, smiling—"Happy landings! Happy landings, you!"

The next day was the one that brought to White Orchards what was to be known for many moons as "the Big Storm." It had been gathering all afternoon, and by evening the heat had grown appalling and incredible, even to Janet's American and exigent standards. The smouldering copper sky looked as though it had caught fire from the world and would burn forever; there was not so much as a whisper of air to break the stillness—it seemed as though the whole tortured earth were holding its breath, waiting to see what would happen next. Every one had struggled through the day assuring one another that when evening came it would be all right—dangling the alluring thought of the cool darkness before each other's hot and weary eyes; but the night proved even more outrageous than the day. To the little group seated on the terrace, dispiritedly playing with their coffee, it seemed almost a personal affront. The darkness closed in on them, smothering, heavy, intolerable; they could feel its weight, as though it were some hateful and tangible thing.

"Like—like black cotton wool," explained Rosemary, stirred to unwonted resentment. She had spent the day

curled up in the largest Indian chair on the terrace, round-eyed with fatigue and incredulity.

"I honestly think that we must be dreaming," she murmured to her feverish audience; "I do, honestly. Why, it's only *May*, and we never, never—there was that day in August about five years ago that was almost as bad, though. D'you remember, Mummy?"

"It's hardly the kind of thing that one is likely to forget, love. Do you think that it is necessary for us to talk? I feel somehow that I could bear it much more easily if we kept quite quiet."

Janet stirred a little, uneasily. She hated silence—that terrible, empty space waiting to be filled up with your thoughts—why, the idlest chatter spared you that. She hated the terrace, too—she closed her eyes to shut out the ugly darkness that was pressing against her; behind the shelter of her lids it was cooler and stiller, but open-eyed or closed, she could not shut out memory. The very touch of the bricks beneath her feet brought back that late October day. She had been sitting curled up on the steps in the warm sunlight, with the keen, sweet air stirring her hair and sending the beech-leaves dancing down the flagged path—there had been a heavenly smell of burning from the far meadow, and she was sniffing it luxuriously, feeling warm and joyous and protected in Jerry's great tweed coat—watching the tall figure swinging across from the lodge gate with idle, happy eyes—not even curious. It was not until he had almost reached the steps that she had noticed that he was wearing a foreign uniform—and even then she had promptly placed him as one of Rosemary's innumerable conquests, bestowing on him a friendly and inquiring smile.

"Were you looking for Miss Langdon?" Even now she could see the courteous, grave young face soften as he turned quickly toward her, baring his dark head with that swift foreign grace that turns our perfunctory habits into something like a ritual.

"But no," he had said gently, "I was looking for you, Miss Abbott."

"Now will you please tell me how in the world you knew that I was Miss Abbott?"

And he had smiled—with his lips, not his eyes.

"I should be dull indeed if that I did not know. I am Philippe Laurent, Miss Abbott."

And "Oh," she had cried joyously, "Liane's Philippe!"

"But yes—Liane's Philippe. They are not here, the others? Madame Langdon, the little Miss Rosemary?"

"No, they've gone to some parish fair, and I've been wicked and stayed home. Won't you sit down and talk to me? Please!"

"Miss Abbott, it is not to you that I must talk. What I have to say is indeed most difficult, and it is to Jeremy's Janie that I would say it. May I, then?"

It had seemed to Jeremy's Janie that the voice in which she answered him came from a great distance, but she never took her eyes from the grave and vivid face.

"Yes. And quickly, please."

So he had told her—quickly—in his exquisitely careful English, and she had listened as attentively and politely, huddled up on the brick steps in the sunlight, as though he were running over the details of the last drive, instead of tearing her life to pieces with every word. She remembered now that it hadn't seemed real at all—if it had been to Jerry that these horrors had happened could she have sat there so quietly, feeling the colour bright in her cheeks, and the wind stirring in her hair, and the sunlight warm on her hands? Why, for less than this people screamed, and fainted, and went raving mad!

"You say—that his back is broken?"

"But yes, my dear," Liane's Philippe had told her, and she had seen the tears shining in his gray eyes.

"And he is badly burned?"

"My brave Janie, these questions are not good to ask—not good, not good to answer. This I will tell you. He lives, our Jerry—and so dearly does he love you that he will drag back that poor body from hell itself—because it is yours, not his. This he has sent me to tell you, most lucky lady ever loved."

"You mean—that he isn't going to die?"

"I tell you that into those small hands of yours he has given his life. Hold it fast."

"Will he—will he get well?"

"He will not walk again; but have you not swift feet to run for him?"

And there had come to her, sitting on the terrace in the sunshine, an overwhelming flood of joy, reckless and cruel and triumphant. Now he was hers forever, the restless wanderer—delivered to her bound and helpless, never to stray again. Hers to worship and serve and slave for, his troth to Freedom broken—hers at last!

"I'm coming," she had told the tall young Frenchman breathlessly. "Take me to him—please let's hurry."

"*Ma pauvre petite*, this is war. One does not come and go at will. God knows by what miracle enough red tape unwound to let me through to you, to bring my message and to take one back."

"What message, Philippe?"

"That is for you to say, little Janie. He told me, 'Say to her that she has my heart—if she needs my body, I will live. Say to her that it is an ugly, broken, and useless thing; still, hers. She must use it as she sees fit. Say to her—no, say nothing more. She is my Janie, and has no need of words. Tell her to send me only one, and I will be content.' For that one word, Janie, I have come many miles. What shall it be?"

And she had cried out exultantly, "Why, tell him that I say——" But the word had died in her throat. Her treacherous lips had mutinied, and she had sat there, feeling the blood drain back out of her face—out of her heart—feeling her eyes turn back with sheer terror, while she fought with those stiffened rebels. Such a little word "Live!"—surely they could say that. Was it not what he was waiting for, lying far away and still—schooled at last to patience, the reckless and the restless! Oh, Jerry, Jerry, live! Even now she could feel her mind, like some frantic little wild thing, racing, racing to escape Memory. What had he said to her? "You, wise beyond wisdom, will never hold me—you will never hold me—you will never——"

And suddenly she had dropped her twisted hands in her lap and lifted her eyes to Jerry's ambassador.

"Will you please tell him—will you please tell him that I say—'Contact'?"

"Contact?" He had stood smiling down at her, ironical and tender. "Ah, what a race! That is the prettiest word that you can find for Jerry? But then it means to come very close, to touch, that poor harsh word—there he must find what comfort he can. We, too, in aviation use that word—it is the signal that says—'Now, you can fly!' You do not know our vocabulary, perhaps?"

"I know very little."

"That is all then? No other message? He will understand, our Jerry?"

And Janie had smiled—rather a terrible small smile.

"Oh, yes," she told him. "He will understand. It is the word that he is waiting for, you see."

"I see." But there had been a grave wonder in his voice.

"Would it——" she had framed the words as carefully as though it were a strange tongue that she was speaking—"would it be possible to buy his machine? He wouldn't want any one else to fly it."

"Little Janie, never fear. The man does not live who shall fly poor Peg again. Smashed to kindling-wood and burned to ashes, she has taken her last flight to the heaven for good and brave birds of war. Not enough was left of her to hold in your two hands."

"I'm glad. Then that's all— isn't it? And thank you for coming."

"It is I who thank you. What was hard as death you have made easy. I had thought the lady to whom Jeremy Langdon gave his heart the luckiest creature ever born—now I think him that luckiest one." The grave grace with which he had bent to kiss her hand made of the formal salutation an accolade—"My homage to you, Jerry's Janie!" A quick salute, and he had turned on his heel, swinging off down the flagged path with that swift, easy stride—past the sun-dial—past the lily-pond—past the beech-trees—gone! For hours and hours after he had passed out of sight she had sat staring after him, her hands lying quite still in her lap—staring, staring—they had found her there when they came back, sitting where Rosemary was seated now. Why, there, on those same steps, a bare six months ago—Something snapped in her head, and she stumbled to her feet, clinging to the arm of her chair.

“I can’t *stand* it!” she gasped. “No, no, it’s no use—I can’t, I tell you. I——”

Rosemary’s arm was about her—Mrs. Langdon’s soft voice in her ears—a deeper note from Rosemary’s engineer.

“Oh, I say, poor girl! What is it, dear child—what’s the matter? Is it the heat, Janie?”

“The heat!” She could hear herself laughing—frantic, hateful, jangling laughter that wouldn’t stop. “Oh, Jerry! Oh-h, Jerry, Jerry, Jerry!”

“It’s this ghastly day. Let me get her some water, Mrs. Langdon. Don’t cry so, Janie—please, please don’t, darling.”

“I c-can’t help it—I c-can’t——” She paused, listening intently, her hand closing sharply over Rosemary’s wrist. “Oh, listen, listen—there it comes again—I told you so!”

“Thank Heaven,” murmured Mrs. Langdon devoutly, “I thought that it never was going to rise this evening. It’s from the south, too, so I suppose that it means rain.”

“Rain?” repeated Janet vaguely. “Why in the world should it mean rain?” Her small, pale face looked suddenly brilliant and enchanted, tilted up to meet the thunderous music that was swinging nearer and nearer. “Oh, do listen, you people! This time it’s surely going to land!”

Rosemary stared at her blankly. “Land? What *are* you talking about, Janie?”

“My airplane—the one that you said was the fat Hodges boy on a motorcycle! Is there any place near here that it can make a landing?”

“Darling child——” Mrs. Langdon’s gentle voice was gentler than ever—“darling child, it’s this wretched heat. There isn’t any airplane, dear—it’s just the wind rising in the beeches.”

“The wind?” Janet laughed aloud—they really were too absurd. “Why, Mrs. Langdon, you can hear the *engines*, if you’ll only listen! You can hear them, can’t you, Mr. Bain?”

The young engineer shook his head. “No plane would risk flying with this storm coming, Miss Abbott. There’s been thunder for the last hour or so, and it’s getting nearer, too. It’s only the wind, I think.”

“Oh, you’re laughing at me—of course, of course you hear it. Why, it’s as clear as—as clear as——”

Her voice trailed off into silence. Quite suddenly, without any transition or warning, she knew. She could feel her heart stand perfectly still for a minute, and then plunge forward in mad flight, racing, racing—oh, it knew, too, that eager heart! She took her hand from the arm of the chair, releasing Rosemary's wrist very gently.

"Yes, of course, it's the heat," she said quietly. She must be careful not to frighten them, these kind ones. "If you don't mind, Mrs. Langdon, I think that I'll go down to the gate to watch the storm burst. No, please, don't any of you come—I'll promise to change everything if I get caught—yes, everything! I won't be long; don't wait for me."

She walked sedately enough until she came to the turn in the path, but after that she ran, only pausing for a minute to listen breathlessly. Oh, yes—following, following, that gigantic music! How he must be laughing at her now—blind, deaf, incredulous little fool that she had been, to doubt that Jerry would find a way! But where could he land? Not in the garden—not at the gates—oh, now she had it—the far meadow. She turned sharply; it was dark, but the path must be here. Yes, this was the wicket gate; her groping fingers were quite steady—they found the latch—released it—the gate swung to behind her flying footsteps. "Oh, Jerry, Jerry!" sang her heart. Why hadn't she worn the rose-coloured frock? It was she who would be a ghost in that trailing white thing. To the right here—yes, there was the hawthorn hedge—only a few steps more—oh, now! She stood as still as a small statue, not moving, not breathing, her hands at her heart, her face turned to the black and torn sky. Nearer, nearer, circling and darting and swooping—the gigantic humming grew louder—louder still—it swept about her thunderously, so close that she clapped her hands over her ears, but she stood her ground, exultant and undaunted. Oh, louder still—and then suddenly the storm broke. All the winds and the rains of the world were unleashed, and fell howling and shrieking upon her; she staggered under their onslaught, drenched to the bone, her dress whipping frantically about her, blinded and deafened by that tumultuous clamour. She had only one weapon against it—laughter—and she laughed now—straight into its teeth. And as though hell itself must yield to mirth, the fury wavered—

failed—sank to muttering. But Janie, beaten to her knees and laughing, never even heard it die.

“Jerry?” she whispered into the darkness, “Jerry?”

Oh, more wonderful than wonder, he was there! She could feel him stir, even if she could not hear him—so close, so close was he that if she even reached out her hand, she could touch him. She stretched it out eagerly, but there was nothing there—only a small, remote sound of withdrawal, as though some one had moved a little.

“You’re afraid that I’ll be frightened, aren’t you?” she asked wistfully. “I wouldn’t be—I wouldn’t—please come back!”

He was laughing at her, she knew, tender and mocking and caressing; she smiled back, tremulously.

“You’re thinking, ‘I told you so!’ Have you come far to say it to me?”

Only that little stir—the wind was rising again.

“Jerry, come close—come closer still. What are you waiting for, dear and dearest?”

This time there was not even a stir to answer her; she felt suddenly cold to the heart. What had he always waited for?

“You aren’t waiting—you aren’t waiting to go?” She fought to keep the terror out of her voice, but it had her by the throat. “Oh, no, no—you can’t—not again! Jerry, Jerry, don’t go away and leave me—truly and truly I can’t stand it—truly!”

She wrung her hands together desperately; she was on her knees to him—did he wish her to go lower still? Oh, she had never learned to beg!

“I can’t send you away again—I can’t. When I sent you to France I killed my heart—when I let you go to death, I crucified my soul. I haven’t anything left but my pride—you can have that, too. I can’t send you back to your heaven. Stay with me—stay with me, Jerry!”

Not a sound—not a stir—but well she knew that he was standing there, waiting. She rose slowly to her feet.

“Very well—you’ve won,” she said hardily. “Go back to your saints and seraphs and angels; I’m beaten. I was mad to think that you ever cared—go back!” She turned, stumbling, the sobs tearing at her throat; she had gone several steps

before she realized that he was following her—and all the hardness and bitterness and despair fell from her like a cloak.

"Oh, Jerry," she whispered, "Jerry, darling, I'm so sorry. And you've come so far—just to find this! What is it that you want; can't you tell me?"

She stood tense and still, straining eyes and ears for her answer—but it was not to eyes or ears that it came.

"Oh, of course!" she cried clearly. "Of course, my wanderer! Ready?"

She stood poised for a second, head thrown back, arms flung wide—a small figure of Victory, caught in the flying wind.

And, "Contact, Jerry!" she called joyously into the darkness. "Contact!"

There was a mighty whirring, a thunder and a roaring above the storm. She stood listening breathlessly to it rise and swell—and then grow fainter—fainter still—dying, dying—dying——

But Janie, her small white face turned to the storm-swept sky behind which shone the stars, was smiling radiantly. For she had sped her wanderer on his way—she had not failed him!

THE CAMEL'S BACK

By F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

From The Saturday Evening Post

THE restless, wearied eye of the tired magazine reader resting for a critical second on the above title will judge it to be merely metaphorical. Stories about the cup and the lip and the bad penny and the new broom rarely have anything to do with cups and lips and pennies and brooms. This story is the great exception. It has to do with an actual, material, visible and large-as-life camel's back.

Starting from the neck we shall work tailward. Meet Mr. Perry Parkhurst, twenty-eight, lawyer, native of Toledo. Perry has nice teeth, a Harvard education, and parts his hair in the middle. You have met him before—in Cleveland, Portland, St. Paul, Indianapolis, Kansas City and elsewhere. Baker Brothers, New York, pause on their semi-annual trip through the West to clothe him; Montmorency & Co., dispatch a young man posthaste every three months to see that he has the correct number of little punctures on his shoes. He has a domestic roadster now, will have a French roadster if he lives long enough, and doubtless a Chinese one if it comes into fashion. He looks like the advertisement of the young man rubbing his sunset-coloured chest with liniment, goes East every year to the Harvard reunion—does everything—smokes a little too much—— Oh, you've seen him.

Meet his girl. Her name is Betty Medill, and she would take well in the movies. Her father gives her two hundred a month to dress on and she has tawny eyes and hair, and feather fans of three colours. Meet her father, Cyrus Medill. Though he is to all appearances flesh and blood he is, strange to say, commonly known in Toledo as the Aluminum Man. But when he sits in his club window with two or three Iron Men and the White Pine Man and the Brass Man they look

very much as you and I do, only more so, if you know what I mean.

Meet the camel's back—or no—don't meet the camel's back yet. Meet the story.

During the Christmas holidays of 1919, the first real Christmas holidays since the war, there took place in Toledo, counting only the people with the italicized *the*, forty-one dinner parties, sixteen dances, six luncheons male and female, eleven luncheons female, twelve teas, four stag dinners, two weddings and thirteen bridge parties. It was the cumulative effect of all this that moved Perry Parkhurst on the twenty-ninth day of December to a desperate decision.

Betty Medill would marry him and she wouldn't marry him. She was having such a good time that she hated to take such a definite step. Meanwhile, their secret engagement had got so long that it seemed as if any day it might break off of its own weight. A little man named Warburton, who knew it all, persuaded Perry to superman her, to get a marriage license and go up to the Medill house and tell her she'd have to marry him at once or call it off forever. This is some stunt—but Perry tried it on December the twenty-ninth. He presented self, heart, license, and ultimatum, and within five minutes they were in the midst of a violent quarrel, a burst of sporadic open fighting such as occurs near the end of all long wars and engagements. It brought about one of those ghastly lapses in which two people who are in love pull up sharp, look at each other coolly and think it's all been a mistake. Afterward they usually kiss wholesomely and assure the other person it was all their fault. Say it all was my fault! Say it was! I want to hear you say it!

But while reconciliation was trembling in the air, while each was, in a measure, stalling it off, so that they might the more voluptuously and sentimentally enjoy it when it came, they were permanently interrupted by a twenty-minute phone call for Betty from a garrulous aunt who lived in the country. At the end of eighteen minutes Perry Parkhurst, torn by pride and suspicion and urged on by injured dignity, put on his long fur coat, picked up his light brown soft hat and stalked out the door.

"It's all over," he muttered brokenly as he tried to jam his car into first. "It's all over—if I have to choke vol

for an hour, darn you!" This last to the car, which had been standing some time and was quite cold.

He drove downtown—that is, he got into a snow rut that led him downtown.

He sat slouched down very low in his seat, much too dispirited to care where he went. He was living over the next twenty years without Betty.

In front of the Clarendon Hotel he was hailed from the sidewalk by a bad man named Baily, who had big huge teeth and lived at the hotel and had never been in love.

"Perry," said the bad man softly when the roadster drew up beside him at the curb, "I've got six quarts of the doggonedest champagne you ever tasted. A third of it's yours, Perry, if you'll come upstairs and help Martin Macy and me drink it."

"Baily," said Perry tensely. "I'll drink your champagne. I'll drink every drop of it. I don't care if it kills me. I don't care if it's fifty-proof wood alcohol."

"Shut up, you nut!" said the bad man gently. "They don't put wood alcohol in champagne. This is the stuff that proves the world is more than six thousand years old. It's so ancient that the cork is petrified. You have to pull it with a stone drill."

"Take me upstairs," said Perry moodily. "If that cork sees my heart it'll fall out from pure mortification."

The room upstairs was full of those innocent hotel pictures of little girls eating apples and sitting in swings and talking to dogs. The other decorations were neckties and a pink man reading a pink paper devoted to ladies in pink tights.

"When you have to go into the highways and byways——" said the pink man, looking reproachfully at Baily and Perry.

"Hello, Martin Macy," said Perry shortly, "where's this stone-age champagne?"

"What's the rush? This isn't an operation, understand. This is a party."

Perry sat down dully and looked disapprovingly at all the neckties.

Baily leisurely opened the door of a wardrobe and brought out six wicked-looking bottles and three glasses.

"Take off that darn fur coat!" said Martin Macy to Perry. "Or maybe you'd like to have us open all the windows."

"Give me champagne," said Perry.

"Going to the Townsends' circus ball to-night?"

"Am not!"

"'Vited?"

"Uh-huh."

"Why not go?"

"Oh, I'm sick of parties," exclaimed Perry, "I'm sick 'of 'em. I've been to so many that I'm sick of 'em."

"Maybe you're going to the Howard Tates' party?"

"No, I tell you; I'm sick of 'em."

"Well," said Macy consolingly, "the Tates' is just for college kids anyway."

"I tell you——"

"I thought you'd be going to one of 'em anyways. I see by the papers you haven't missed a one this Christmas."

"Hm," grunted Perry morosely.

He would never go to any more parties. Classical phrases played in his mind—that side of his life was closed, closed. Now when a man says "closed, closed" like that, you can be pretty sure that some woman has double-closed him, so to speak. Perry was also thinking that other classical thought, about how cowardly suicide is. A noble thought that one—warm and uplifting. Think of all the fine men we should lose if suicide were not so cowardly!

An hour later was six o'clock, and Perry had lost all resemblance to the young man in the liniment advertisement. He looked like a rough draft for a riotous cartoon. They were singing—an impromptu song of Baily's improvisation:

One Lump Perry, the parlour snake,

Famous through the city for the way he drinks his tea;

Plays with it, toys with it,

Makes no noise with it,

Balanced on a napkin on his well-trained knee.

"Trouble is," said Perry, who had just banged his hair with Bailey's comb and was tying an orange tie round it to get the effect of Julius Cæsar, "that you fellas can't sing worth a damn. Soon's I leave th' air an' start singin' tenor you start singin' tenor too."

"'M a natural tenor," said Macy gravely. "Voice lacks cultivation, tha's all. Gotta natural voice, m'aunt used say. Naturally good singer."

"Singers, singers, all good singers," remarked Baily, who was at the telephone. "No, not the cabaret; I want night clerk. I mean refreshment clerk or some dog-gone clerk 'at's got food—food! I want——"

"Julius Cæsar," announced Perry, turning round from the mirror. "Man of iron will and stern 'termination."

"Shut up!" yelled Baily. "Say, iss Mr. Baily. Sen' up enormous supper. Use y'own judgment. Right away."

He connected the receiver and the hook with some difficulty and then with his lips closed and an air of solemn intensity in his eyes went to the lower drawer of his dresser and pulled it open.

"Lookit!" he commanded. In his hands he held a truncated garment of pink gingham.

"Pants," he explained gravely. "Lookit!" This was a pink blouse, a red tie and a Buster Brown collar.

"Lookit!" he repeated. "Costume for the Townsends' circus ball. I'm li'l' boy carries water for the elephants."

Perry was impressed in spite of himself.

"I'm going to be Julius Cæsar," he announced after a moment of concentration.

"Thought you weren't going!" said Macy.

"Me? Sure, I'm goin'. Never miss a party. Good for the nerves—like celery."

"Cæsar!" scoffed Baily. "Can't be Cæsar! He's not about a circus. Cæsar's Shakespeare. Go as a clown."

Perry shook his head.

"Nope; Cæsar."

"Cæsar?"

"Sure. Chariot."

Light dawned on Baily.

"That's right. Good idea."

Perry looked round the room searchingly.

"You lend me a bathrobe and this tie," he said finally.

Baily considered.

"No good."

"Sure, tha's all I need. Cæsar was a savage. They can't kick if I come as Cæsar if he was a savage."

"No," said Baily, shaking his head slowly. "Get a costume over at a costumer's. Over at Nolak's."

"Closed up."

"Find out."

After a puzzling five minutes at the phone a small, weary voice managed to convince Perry that it was Mr. Nolak speaking, and that they would remain open until eight because of the Townsends' ball. Thus assured, Perry ate a great amount of filet mignon and drank his third of the last bottle of champagne. At eight-fifteen the man in the tall hat who stands in front of the Clarendon found him trying to start his roadster.

"Froze up," said Perry wisely. "The cold froze it. The cold air."

"Froze, eh?"

"Yes. Cold air froze it."

"Can't start it?"

"Nope. Let it stand here till summer. One those hot ole August days'll thaw it out awright."

"Goin' let it stand?"

"Sure. Let 'er stand. Take a hot thief to steal it. Gemme taxi."

The man in the tall hat summoned a taxi.

"Where to, mister?"

"Go to Nolak's—costume fella."

II

Mrs. Nolak was short and ineffectual looking, and on the cessation of the world war had belonged for a while to one of the new nationalities. Owing to the unsettled European conditions she had never since been quite sure what she was. The shop in which she and her husband performed their daily stint was dim and ghostly and peopled with suits of armour and Chinese mandarins and enormous papier-mâché birds suspended from the ceiling. In a vague background many rows of masks glared eyelessly at the visitor, and there were glass cases full of crowns and scepters and jewels and enormous stomachers and paints and powders and crape hair and face creams and wigs of all colours.

When Perry ambled into the shop Mrs. Nolak was folding up the last troubles of a strenuous day, so she thought, in a drawer full of pink silk stockings.

"Something for you?" she queried pessimistically.

"Want costume of Julius Hur, the charioteer."

Mrs. Nolak was sorry, but every stitch of charioteer had been rented long ago. Was it for the Townsends' circus ball?

It was.

"Sorry," she said, "but I don't think there's anything left that's really circus."

This was an obstacle.

"Hm," said Perry. An idea struck him suddenly. "If you've got a piece of canvas I could go's a tent."

"Sorry, but we haven't anything like that. A hardware store is where you'd have to go to. We have some very nice Confederate soldiers."

"No, no soldiers."

"And I have a very handsome king."

He shook his head.

"Several of the gentlemen," she continued hopefully, "are wearing stovepipe hats and swallow-tail coats and going as ringmasters—but we're all out of tall hats. I can let you have some crape hair for a moustache."

"Want somep'm 'stinctive."

"Something—let's see. Well, we have a lion's head, and a goose, and a camel——"

"Camel?" The idea seized Perry's imagination, gripped it fiercely.

"Yes, but it needs two people."

"Camel. That's an idea. Lemme see it."

The camel was produced from his resting place on a top shelf. At first glance he appeared to consist entirely of a very gaunt, cadaverous head and a sizable hump, but on being spread out he was found to possess a dark brown, unwholesome-looking body made of thick, cottony cloth.

"You see it takes two people," explained Mrs. Nolak, holding the camel up in frank admiration. "If you have a friend he could be part of it. You see there's sorta pants for two people. One pair is for the fella in front and the other pair for the fella in back. The fella in front does the lookin' out through these here eyes an' the fella in back he's just gotta stoop over an' folla the front fella round."

"Put it on," commanded Perry.

Obediently Mrs. Nolak put her tabby-cat face inside the camel's head and turned it from side to side ferociously.

Perry was fascinated.

"What noise does a camel make?"

"What?" asked Mrs. Nolak as her face emerged, somewhat smudgy. "Oh, what noise? Why, he sorta brays."

"Lemme see it in a mirror."

Before a wide mirror Perry tried on the head and turned from side to side appraisingly. In the dim light the effect was distinctly pleasing. The camel's face was a study in pessimism, decorated with numerous abrasions, and it must be admitted that his coat was in that state of general negligence peculiar to camels—in fact, he needed to be cleaned and pressed—but distinctive he certainly was. He was majestic. He would have attracted attention in any gathering if only by his melancholy cast of feature and the look of pensive hunger lurking round his shadowy eyes.

"You see you have to have two people," said Mrs. Nolak again.

Perry tentatively gathered up the body and legs and wrapped them about him, tying the hind legs as a girdle round his waist. The effect on the whole was bad. It was even irreverent—like one of those medieval pictures of a monk changed into a beast by the ministrations of Satan. At the very best the ensemble resembled a humpbacked cow sitting on her haunches among blankets.

"Don't look like anything at all," objected Perry gloomily.

"No," said Mrs. Nolak; "you see you got to have two people."

A solution flashed upon Perry.

"You got a date to-night?"

"Oh, I couldn't possibly——"

"Oh, come on," said Perry encouragingly. "Sure you can! Here! Be a good sport and climb into these hind legs."

With difficulty he located them and extended their yawning depths ingratiatingly. But Mrs. Nolak seemed loath. She backed perversely away.

"Oh, no——"

"C'm on! Why, you can be the front if you want to. Or we'll flip a coin."

"Oh, no——"

"Make it worth your while."

Mrs. Nolak set her lips firmly together.

"Now you just stop!" she said with no coyness implied. "None of the gentlemen ever acted up this way before. My husband——"

"You got a husband?" demanded Perry. "Where is he?"

"He's home."

"Wha's telephone number?"

After considerable parley he obtained the telephone number pertaining to the Nolak penates and got into communication with that small, weary voice he had heard once before that day. But Mr. Nolak, though taken off his guard and somewhat confused by Perry's brilliant flow of logic, stuck staunchly to his point. He refused firmly but with dignity to help out Mr. Parkhurst in the capacity of back part of a camel.

Having rung off, or rather having been rung off on, Perry sat down on a three-legged stool to think it over. He named over to himself those friends on whom he might call, and then his mind paused as Betty Medill's name hazily and sorrowfully occurred to him. He had a sentimental thought. He would ask her. Their love affair was over, but she could not refuse this last request. Surely it was not much to ask—to help him keep up his end of social obligation for one short night. And if she insisted she could be the front part of the camel and he would go as the back. His magnanimity pleased him. His mind even turned to rosy-coloured dreams of a tender reconciliation inside the camel—there hidden away from all the world.

"Now you'd better decide right off."

The bourgeois voice of Mrs. Nolak broke in upon his mellow fancies and roused him to action. He went to the phone and called up the Medill house. Miss Betty was out; had gone out to dinner.

Then, when all seemed lost, the camel's back wandered curiously into the store. He was a dilapidated individual with a cold in his head and a general trend about him of downwardness. His cap was pulled down low on his head, and his chin was pulled down low on his chest, his coat hung down to his shoes, he looked run-down, down at the heels, and—Salvation Army to the contrary—down and out. He said that he was the taxicab driver that the gentleman had hired at the Clarendon Hotel. He had been instructed to wait outside,

but he had waited some time and a suspicion had grown upon him that the gentleman had gone out the back way with purpose to defraud him—gentlemen sometimes did—so he had come in. He sank down on to the three-legged stool.

"Wanta go to a party?" demanded Perry sternly.

"I gotta work," answered the taxi driver lugubriously. "I gotta keep my job."

"It's a very good party."

"'S a very good job."

"Come on!" urged Perry. "Be a good fella. See—it's pretty!" He held the camel up and the taxi driver looked at it cynically.

"Huh!"

Perry searched feverishly among the folds of the cloth.

"See!" he cried enthusiastically, holding up a selection of folds. "This is your part. You don't even have to talk. All you have to do is to walk—and sit down occasionally. You do all the sitting down. Think of it. I'm on my feet all the time and you can sit down some of the time. The only time I can sit down is when we're lying down, and you can sit down when—oh, any time. See?"

"What's 'at thing?" demanded the individual dubiously
"A shroud?"

"Not at all," said Perry hurriedly. "It's a camel."

"Huh?"

Then Perry mentioned a sum of money, and the conversation left the land of grunts and assumed a practical tinge. Perry and the taxi driver tried on the camel in front of the mirror.

"You can't see it," explained Perry, peering anxiously out through the eyeholes, "but honestly, ole man, you look sim'ly great! Honestly!"

A grunt from the hump acknowledged this somewhat dubious compliment.

"Honestly, you look great!" repeated Perry enthusiastically. "Move round a little."

The hing legs moved forward, giving the effect of a huge cat-camel hunching his back preparatory to a spring.

"No; move sideways."

The camel's hips went neatly out of joint; a hula dancer would have writhed in envy.

"Good, isn't it?" demanded Perry, turning to Mrs. Nolak for approval.

"It looks lovely," agreed Mrs. Nolak.

"We'll take it," said Perry.

The bundle was safely stowed under Perry's arm and they left the shop.

"Go to the party!" he commanded as he took his seat in the back.

"What party?"

"Fanzzy-dress party."

"Where 'bouts is it?"

This presented a new problem. Perry tried to remember, but the names of all those who had given parties during the holidays danced confusedly before his eyes. He could ask Mrs. Nolak, but on looking out the window he saw that the shop was dark. Mrs. Nolak had already faded out, a little black smudge far down the snowy street.

"Drive uptown," directed Perry with fine confidence. "If you see a party, stop. Otherwise I'll tell you when we get there."

He fell into a hazy daydream and his thoughts wandered again to Betty—he imagined vaguely that they had had a disagreement because she refused to go to the party as the back part of the camel. He was just slipping off into a chilly doze when he was awakened by the taxi driver opening the door and shaking him by the arm.

"Here we are, maybe."

Perry looked out sleepily. A striped awning led from the curb up to a spreading gray stone house, from inside which issued the low drummy whine of expensive jazz. He recognized the Howard Tate house.

"Sure," he said emphatically; "'at's it! Tate's party to-night. Sure, everybody's goin'."

"Say," said the individual anxiously after another look at the awning, "you sure these people ain't gonna romp on me for comin' here?"

Perry drew himself up with dignity.

"'F anybody says anything to you, just tell 'em you're part of my costume."

The visualization of himself as a thing rather than a person seemed to reassure the individual.

"All right," he said reluctantly.

Perry stepped out under the shelter of the awning and began unrolling the camel.

"Let's go," he commanded.

Several minutes later a melancholy, hungry-looking camel, emitting clouds of smoke from his mouth and from the tip of his noble hump, might have been seen crossing the threshold of the Howard Tate residence, passing a startled footman without so much as a snort, and leading directly for the main stairs that led up to the ballroom. The beast walked with a peculiar gait which varied between an uncertain lockstep and a stampe—pede—but can best be described by the word "halting." The camel had a halting gait—and as he walked he alternately elongated and contracted like a gigantic concertina.

III

The Howard Tates are, as everyone who lives in Toledo knows, the most formidable people in town. Mrs. Howard Tate was a Chicago Todd before she became a Toledo Tate, and the family generally affect that conscious simplicity which has begun to be the earmark of American aristocracy. The Tates have reached the stage where they talk about pigs and farms and look at you icy-eyed if you are not amused. They have begun to prefer retainers rather than friends as dinner guests, spend a lot of money in a quiet way and, having lost all sense of competition, are in process of growing quite dull.

The dance this evening was for little Millicent Tate, and though there was a scattering of people of all ages present the dancers were mostly from school and college—the younger married crowd was at the Townsends' circus ball up at the Tallyho Club. Mrs. Tate was standing just inside the ballroom, following Millicent round with her eyes and beaming whenever she caught her eye. Beside her were two middle-aged sycophants who were saying what a perfectly exquisite child Millicent was. It was at this moment that Mrs. Tate was grasped firmly by the skirt and her youngest daughter, Emily, aged eleven, hurled herself with an "Oof—!" into her mother's arms.

"Why, Emily, what's the trouble?"

"Mamma," said Emily, wild-eyed but voluble, "there's something out on the stairs."

"What?"

"There's a thing out on the stairs, mamma. I think it's a big dog, mamma, but it doesn't look like a dog."

"What do you mean, Emily?"

The sycophants waved their heads and hemmed sympathetically.

"Mamma, it looks like a—like a camel."

Mrs. Tate laughed.

"You saw a mean old shadow, dear, that's all."

"No, I didn't. No, it was some kind of thing, mamma—big. I was downstairs going to see if there were any more people and this dog or something, he was coming upstairs. Kinda funny, mamma, like he was lame. And then he saw me and gave a sort of growl and then he slipped at the top of the landing and I ran."

Mrs. Tate's laugh faded.

"The child must have seen something," she said.

The sycophants agreed that the child must have seen something—and suddenly all three women took an instinctive step away from the door as the sounds of muffled footsteps were audible just outside.

And then three startled gasps rang out as a dark brown form rounded the corner and they saw what was apparently a huge beast looking down at them hungrily.

"Oof!" cried Mrs. Tate.

"O-o-oh!" cried the ladies in a chorus.

The camel suddenly humped his back, and the gasps turned to shrieks.

"Oh—look!"

"What is it?"

The dancing stopped, but the dancers hurrying over got quite a different impression of the invader from that of the ladies by the door; in fact, the young people immediately suspected that it was a stunt, a hired entertainer come to amuse the party. The boys in long trousers looked at it rather disdainfully and sauntered over with their hands in their pockets, feeling that their intelligence was being insulted. But the girls ran over with much handclapping and many little shouts of glee.

"It's a camel!"

"Well, if he isn't the funniest!"

The camel stood there uncertainly, swaying slightly from side to side and seeming to take in the room in a careful, appraising glance; then as if he had come to an abrupt decision he turned and ambled swiftly out the door.

Mr. Howard Tate had just come out of his den on the lower floor and was standing chatting with a good-looking young man in the hall. Suddenly they heard the noise of shouting upstairs and almost immediately a succession of bumping sounds, followed by the precipitous appearance at the foot of the stairway of a large brown beast who seemed to be going somewhere in a great hurry.

"Now what the devil!" said Mr. Tate, starting.

The beast picked itself up with some dignity and affecting an air of extreme nonchalance, as if he had just remembered an important engagement, started at a mixed gait toward the front door. In fact, his front legs began casually to run.

"See here now," said Mr. Tate sternly. "Here! Grab it, Butterfield! Grab it!"

The young man enveloped the rear of the camel in a pair of brawny arms, and evidently realizing that further locomotion was quite impossible the front end submitted to capture and stood resignedly in a state of some agitation. By this time a flood of young people was pouring downstairs, and Mr. Tate, suspecting everything from an ingenious burglar to an escaped lunatic, gave crisp directions to the good-looking young man:

"Hold him! Lead him in here; we'll soon see."

The camel consented to be led into the den, and Mr. Tate, after locking the door, took a revolver from a table drawer and instructed the young man to take the thing's head off. Then he gasped and returned the revolver to its hiding place.

"Well, Perry Parkhurst!" he exclaimed in amazement.

"'M in the wrong pew," said Perry sheepishly. "Got the wrong party, Mr. Tate. Hope I didn't scare you."

"Well—you gave us a thrill, Perry." Realization dawned on him. "Why, of course; you're bound for the Townsends' circus ball."

"That's the general idea."

"Let me introduce Mr. Butterfield, Mr. Parkhurst. Parkhurst is our most famous young bachelor here." Then turn-

ing to Perry: "Butterfield is staying with us for a few days."

"I got a little mixed up," mumbled Perry. "I'm very sorry."

"Heavens, it's perfectly all right; most natural mistake in the world. I've got a clown costume and I'm going down there myself after a while. Silly idea for a man of my age." He turned to Butterfield. "Better change your mind and come down with us."

The good-looking young man demurred. He was going to bed.

"Have a drink, Perry?" suggested Mr. Tate.

"Thanks, I will."

"And, say," continued Tate quickly, "I'd forgotten all about your—friend here." He indicated the rear part of the camel. "I didn't mean to seem discourteous. Is it any one I know? Bring him out."

"It's not a friend," explained Perry hurriedly. "I just rented him."

"Does he drink?"

"Do you?" demanded Perry, twisting himself tortuously round.

There was a faint sound of assent.

"Sure he does!" said Mr. Tate heartily. "A really efficient camel ought to be able to drink enough so it'd last him three days."

"Tell you, sir," said Perry anxiously, "he isn't exactly dressed up enough to come out. If you give me the bottle I can hand it back to him and he can take his inside."

From under the cloth was audible the enthusiastic smacking sound inspired by this suggestion. When a butler had appeared with bottles, glasses, and siphon one of the bottles was handed back, and thereafter the silent partner could be heard imbibing long potations at frequent intervals.

Thus passed a peaceful hour. At ten o'clock Mr. Tate decided that they'd better be starting. He donned his clown's costume; Perry replaced the camel's head with a sigh; side by side they progressed on foot the single block between the Tate house and the Tallyho Club.

The circus ball was in full swing. A great tent fly had been put up inside the ballroom and round the walls had been built rows of booths representing the various attractions of a

circus side show, but these were now vacated and on the floor swarmed a shouting, laughing medley of youth and colour—clowns, bearded ladies, acrobats, bareback riders, ringmasters, tattooed men and charioteers. The Townsends had determined to assure their party of success, so a great quantity of liquor had been surreptitiously brought over from their house in automobiles and it was flowing freely. A green ribbon ran along the wall completely round the ballroom, with pointing arrows alongside of it and signs which instructed the uninitiated to "Follow the green line!" The green line led down to the bar, where waited pure punch and wicked punch and plain dark-green bottles.

On the wall above the bar was another arrow, red and very wavy, and under it the slogan: "Now follow this!"

But even amid the luxury of costume and high spirits represented there the entrance of the camel created something of a stir, and Perry was immediately surrounded by a curious, laughing crowd who were anxious to penetrate the identity of this beast who stood by the wide doorway eyeing the dancers with his hungry, melancholy gaze.

And then Perry saw Betty. She was standing in front of a booth talking to a group of clowns, comic policemen and ringmasters. She was dressed in the costume of an Egyptian snake charmer, a costume carried out to the smallest detail. Her tawny hair was braided and drawn through brass rings, the effect crowned with a glittering Oriental tiara. Her fair face was stained to a warm olive glow and on her bare arms and the half moon of her back writhed painted serpents with single eyes of venomous green. Her feet were in sandals and her skirt was slit to the knees, so that when she walked one caught a glimpse of other slim serpents painted just above her bare ankles. Wound about her neck was a huge, glittering, cotton-stuffed cobra, and her bracelets were in the form of tiny garter snakes. Altogether a very charming and beautiful costume—one that made the more nervous among the older women shrink away from her when she passed, and the more troublesome ones to make great talk about "shouldn't be allowed" and "perfectly disgraceful."

But Perry, peering through the uncertain eyes of the camel, saw only her face, radiant, animated and glowing with excitement, and her arms and shoulders, whose mobile, expres-

sive gestures made her always the outstanding figure in any gathering. He was fascinated and his fascination exercised a strangely sobering effect on him. With a growing clarity the events of the day came back—he had lost forever this shimmering princess in emerald green and black. Rage rose within him, and with a half-formed intention of taking her away from the crowd he started toward her—or rather he elongated slightly, for he had neglected to issue the preparatory command necessary to locomotion.

But at this point fickle Kismet, who for a day had played with him bitterly and sardonically, decided to reward him in full for the amusement he had afforded her. Kismet turned the tawny eyes of the snake charmer to the camel. Kismet led her to lean toward the man beside her and say, "Who's that? That camel?"

They all gazed.

"Darned if I know."

But a little man named Warburton, who knew it all, found it necessary to hazard an opinion:

"It came in with Mr. Tate. I think it's probably Warren Butterfield, the architect, who's visiting the Tates."

Something stirred in Betty Medill—that age-old interest of the provincial girl in the visiting man.

"Oh," she said casually after a slight pause.

At the end of the next dance Betty and her partner finished up within a few feet of the camel. With the informal audacity that was the keynote of the evening she reached out and gently rubbed the camel's nose.

"Hello, old camel."

The camel stirred uneasily.

"You 'fraid of me?" said Betty, lifting her eyebrows in mock reproof. "Don't be. You see I'm a snake charmer, but I'm pretty good at camels too."

The camel bowed very low and the groups round laughed and made the obvious remark about the beauty and the beast.

Mrs. Townsend came bustling up.

"Well, Mr. Butterfield," she beamed, "I wouldn't have recognized you."

Perry bowed again and smiled gleefully behind his mask.

"And who is this with you?" she inquired.

"Oh," said Perry in a disguised voice, muffled by the thick

cloth and quite unrecognizable, "he isn't a fellow, Mrs. Townsend. He's just part of my costume."

This seemed to get by, for Mrs. Townsend laughed and hustled away. Perry turned again to Betty.

"So," he thought, "this is how much she cares! On the very day of our final rupture she starts a flirtation with another man—an absolute stranger."

On an impulse he gave her a soft nudge with his shoulder and waved his head suggestively toward the hall, making it clear that he desired her to leave her partner and accompany him. Betty seemed quite willing.

"By-by, Bobby," she called laughingly to her partner. "This old camel's got me. Where are we going, Prince of Beasts?"

The noble animal made no rejoinder, but stalked gravely along in the direction of a secluded nook on the side stairs.

There Betty seated herself, and the camel, after some seconds of confusion which included gruff orders and sounds of a heated dispute going on in his interior, placed himself beside her, his hind legs stretching out uncomfortably across two steps.

"Well, camel," said Betty cheerfully, "how do you like our happy party?"

The camel indicated that he liked it by rolling his head ecstatically and executing a gleeful kick with his hoofs.

"This is the first time that I ever had a tête-à-tête with a man's valet round"—she pointed to the hind legs—"or whatever that is."

"Oh," said Perry, "he's deaf and blind. Forget about him."

"That sure is some costume! But I should think you'd feel rather handicapped—you can't very well shimmy, even if you want to."

The camel hung his head lugubriously.

"I wish you'd say something," continued Betty sweetly. "Say you like me, camel. Say you think I'm pretty. Say you'd like to belong to a pretty snake charmer."

The camel would.

"Will you dance with me, camel?"

The camel would try.

Betty devoted half an hour to the camel. She devoted at

least half an hour to all visiting men. It was usually sufficient. When she approached a new man the current débutantes were accustomed to scatter right and left like a close column deploying before a machine gun. And so to Perry Parkhurst was awarded the unique privilege of seeing his love as others saw her. He was flirted with violently!

IV

This paradise of frail foundation was broken into by the sound of a general ingress to the ballroom; the cotillion was beginning. Betty and the camel joined the crowd, her brown hand resting lightly on his shoulder, defiantly symbolizing her complete adoption of him.

When they entered, the couples were already seating themselves at tables round the walls, and Mrs. Townsend, resplendent as a super bareback rider with rather too rotund calves, was standing in the centre with the ringmaster who was in charge of arrangements. At a signal to the band everyone rose and began to dance.

"Isn't it just slick!" breathed Betty.

"You bet!" said the camel.

"Do you think you can possibly dance?"

Perry nodded enthusiastically. He felt suddenly exuberant. After all, he was here incognito talking to his girl—he felt like winking patronizingly at the world.

"I think it's the best idea," cried Betty, "to give a party like this! I don't see how they ever thought of it. Come on, let's dance!"

So Perry danced the cotillion. I say danced, but that is stretching the word far beyond the wildest dreams of the jazziest terpsichorean. He suffered his partner to put her hands on his helpless shoulders and pull him here and there gently over the floor while he hung his huge head docilely over her shoulder and made futile dummy motions with his feet. His hind legs danced in a manner all their own, chiefly by hopping first on one foot and then on the other. Never being sure whether dancing was going on or not, the hind legs played safe by going through a series of steps whenever the music started playing. So the spectacle was frequently presented of the front part of the camel standing at ease and

the rear keeping up a constant energetic motion calculated to rouse a sympathetic perspiration in any soft-hearted observer.

He was frequently favoured. He danced first with a tall lady covered with straw who announced jovially that she was a bale of hay and coyly begged him not to eat her.

"I'd like to; you're so sweet," said the camel gallantly.

Each time the ringmaster shouted his call of "Men up!" he lumbered ferociously for Betty with the cardboard wiener-wurst or the photograph of the bearded lady or whatever the favour chanced to be. Sometimes he reached her first, but usually his rushes were unsuccessful and resulted in intense interior arguments.

"For heaven's sake," Perry would snarl fiercely between his clenched teeth, "get a little pep! I could have gotten her that time if you'd picked your feet up."

"Well, gimme a little warnin'!"

"I did, darn you."

"I can't see a dog-gone thing in here."

"All you have to do is follow me. It's just like dragging a load of sand round to walk with you."

"Maybe you wanta try back here."

"You shut up! If these people found you in this room they'd give you the worst beating you ever had. They'd take your taxi license away from you!"

Perry surprised himself by the ease with which he made this monstrous threat, but it seemed to have a soporific influence on his companion, for he muttered an "aw gwan" and subsided into abashed silence.

The ringmaster mounted to the top of the piano and waved his hand for silence.

"Prizes!" he cried. "Gather round!"

"Yea! Prizes!"

Self-consciously the circle swayed forward. The rather pretty girl who had mustered the nerve to come as a bearded lady trembled with excitement, hoping to be rewarded for an evening's hideousness. The man who had spent the afternoon having tattoo marks painted on him by a sign painter skulked on the edge of the crowd, blushing furiously when any one told him he was sure to get it.

"Lady and gent performers of the circus," announced the ringmaster jovially, "I am sure we will all agree that a good

time has been had by all. We will now bestow honour where honour is due by bestowing the prizes. Mrs. Townsend has asked me to bestow the prizes. Now, fellow performers, the first prize is for that lady who has displayed this evening the most striking, becoming"—at this point the bearded lady sighed resignedly—"and original costume." Here the bale of hay pricked up her ears. "Now I am sure that the decision which has been decided upon will be unanimous with all here present. The first prize goes to Miss Betty Medill, the charming Egyptian snake charmer."

There was a great burst of applause, chiefly masculine, and Miss Betty Medill, blushing beautifully through her olive paint, was passed up to receive her award. With a tender glance the ringmaster handed down to her a huge bouquet of orchids.

"And now," he continued, looking round him, "the other prize is for that man who has the most amusing and original costume. This prize goes without dispute to a guest in our midst, a gentleman who is visiting here but whose stay we will hope will be long and merry—in short to the noble camel who has entertained us all by his hungry look and his brilliant dancing throughout the evening."

He ceased and there was a hearty burst of applause, for it was a popular choice. The prize, a huge box of cigars, was put aside for the camel, as he was anatomically unable to accept it in person.

"And now," continued the ringmaster, "we will wind up the cotillion with the marriage of Mirth to Folly!"

"Form for the grand wedding march, the beautiful snake charmer and the noble camel in front!"

Betty skipped forward cheerily and wound an olive arm round the camel's neck. Behind them formed the procession of little boys, little girls, country jakes, policemen, fat ladies, thin men, sword swallows, wild men of Borneo, armless wonders and charioteers, some of them well in their cups, all of them excited and happy and dazzled by the flow of light and colour round them and by the familiar faces strangely unfamiliar under bizarre wigs and barbaric paint. The voluminous chords of the wedding march done in mad syncope issued in a delirious blend from the saxophones and trombones—and the march began.

"Aren't you glad, camel?" demanded Betty sweetly as

they stepped off. "Aren't you glad we're going to be married and you're going to belong to the nice snake charmer ever afterward?"

The camel's front legs pranced, expressing exceeding joy.

"Minister, minister! Where's the minister?" cried voices out of the revel. "Who's going to be the cler-gy-man?"

The head of Jumbo, rotund negro waiter at the Tallyho Club for many years, appeared rashly through a half-opened pantry door.

"Oh, Jumbo!"

"Get old Jumbo. He's the fella!"

"Come on, Jumbo. How 'bout marrying us a couple?"

"Yea!"

Jumbo despite his protestations was seized by four brawny clowns, stripped of his apron and escorted to a raised dais at the head of the ball. There his collar was removed and replaced back side forward to give him a sanctimonious effect. He stood there grinning from ear to ear, evidently not a little pleased, while the parade separated into two lines leaving an aisle for the bride and groom.

"Lawdy, man," chuckled Jumbo, "Ah got ole Bible 'n' ev'ythin', sho nuff."

He produced a battered Bible from a mysterious interior pocket.

"Yea. Old Jumbo's got a Bible!"

"Razor, too, I'll bet!"

"Marry 'em off, Jumbo!"

Together the snake charmer and the camel ascended the cheering aisle and stopped in front of Jumbo, who adopted a grave pontifical air.

"Where's your license, camel?"

"Make it legal, camel."

A man near by prodded Perry.

"Give him a piece of paper, camel. Anything'll do."

Perry fumbled confusedly in his pocket, found a folded paper and pushed it out through the camel's mouth. Holding it upside down Jumbo pretended to scan it earnestly.

"Dis yeah's a special camel's license," he said. "Get you ring ready, camel."

Inside the camel Perry turned round and addressed his worse half.

"Gimme a ring, for Pete's sake!"

"I ain't got none," protested a weary voice.

"You have. I saw it."

"I ain't goin' to take it offen my hand."

"If you don't I'll kill you."

There was a gasp and Perry felt a huge affair of rhinestone and brass inserted into his hand.

Again he was nudged from the outside.

"Speak up!"

"I do!" cried Perry quickly.

He heard Betty's responses given in a laughing debonair tone, and the sound of them even in this burlesque thrilled him.

If it was only real! he thought. If it only was!

Then he had pushed the rhinestone through a tear in the camel's coat and was slipping it on her finger, muttering ancient and historic words after Jumbo. He didn't want any one to know about this ever. His one idea was to slip away without having to disclose his identity, for Mr. Tate had so far kept his secret well. A dignified young man, Perry—and this might injure his infant law practice.

"Kiss her, camel!"

"Embrace the bride!"

"Unmask, camel, and kiss her!"

Instinctively his heart beat high as Betty turned to him laughingly and began playfully to stroke the cardboard muzzle. He felt his self-control giving away, he longed to seize her in his arms and declare his identity and kiss those scarlet lips that smiled teasingly at him from only a foot away—when suddenly the laughter and applause round them died away and a curious hush fell over the hall. Perry and Betty looked up in surprise. Jumbo had given vent to a huge "Hello!" in such a startled and amazed voice that all eyes were bent on him.

"Hello!" he said again. He had turned round the camel's marriage license, which he had been holding upside down, produced spectacles and was studying it intently.

"Why," he exclaimed, and in the pervading silence his words were heard plainly by everyone in the room, "this yeah's a sho-nuff marriage permit."

"What?"

"Huh?"

"Say it again, Jumbo!"

"Sure you can read?"

Jumbo waved them to silence and Perry's blood burned to fire in his veins as he realized the break he had made.

"Yassuh!" repeated Jumbo. "This yeah's a sho-nuff license, and the pa'ties concerned one of 'em is dis yeah young lady, Miz Betty Medill, and th' other's Mistah Perry Pa'khurst."

There was a general gasp, and a low rumble broke out as all eyes fell on the camel. Betty shrank away from him quickly, her tawny eyes giving out sparks of fury.

"Is you Mistah Pa'khurst, you camel?"

Perry made no answer. The crowd pressed up closer and stared at him as he stood frozen rigid with embarrassment, his cardboard face still hungry and sardonic. regarding the ominous Jumbo.

"You-all bettah speak up!" said Jumbo slowly, "this yeah's a mighty serous mattah. Outside mah duties at this club ah happens to be a sho-nuff minister in the Firs' Cullud Baptis' Church. It done look to me as though you-all is gone an' got married."

V

The scene that followed will go down forever in the annals of the Tallyho Club. Stout matrons fainted, strong men swore, wild-eyed débutantes babbled in lightning groups instantly formed and instantly dissolved, and a great buzz of chatter, virulent yet oddly subdued, hummed through the chaotic ballroom. Feverish youths swore they would kill Perry or Jumbo or themselves or someone and the Baptis' preacheh was besieged by a tempestuous covey of clamorous amateur lawyers, asking questions, making threats, demanding precedents, ordering the bonds annulled, and especially trying to ferret out any hint or suspicion of prearrangement in what had occurred.

On the corner Mrs. Townsend was crying softly on the shoulder of Mr. Howard Tate, who was trying vainly to comfort her; they were exchanging "all my fault's" volubly and voluminously. Outside on a snow covered walk Mr. Cyrus Medill, the Aluminum Man, was being paced slowly up and

down between two brawny charioteers, giving vent now to a grunt, now to a string of unrepeatables, now to wild pleadings that they'd just let him get at Jumbo. He was facetiously attired for the evening as a wild man of Borneo, and the most exacting stage manager after one look at his face would have acknowledged that any improvement in casting the part would have been quite impossible.

Meanwhile the two principals held the real centre of the stage. Betty Medill—or was it Betty Parkhurst?—weeping furiously, was surrounded by the plainer girls—the prettier ones were too busy talking about her to pay much attention to her—and over on the other side of the hall stood the camel, still intact except for his head-piece, which dangled pathetically on his chest. Perry was earnestly engaged in making protestations of his innocence to a ring of angry, puzzled men. Every few minutes just as he had apparently proved his case someone would mention the marriage certificate, and the inquisition would begin again.

A girl named Marion Cloud, considered the second best belle of Toledo, changed the gist of the situation by a remark she made to Betty.

"Well," she said maliciously, "it'll all blow over, dear. The courts will annul it without question."

Betty's tears dried miraculously in her eyes, her lips shut tightly together, and she flashed a withering glance at Marion. Then she rose and scattering her sympathizers right and left walked directly across the room to Perry, who also rose and stood looking at her in terror. Again silence crept down upon the room.

"Will you have the decency," she said, "to grant me five minutes' conversation—or wasn't that included in your plans?"

He nodded, his mouth unable to form words.

Indicating coldly that he was to follow her she walked out into the hall with her chin uptilted and headed for the privacy of one of the little card rooms.

Perry started after her, but was brought to a jerky halt by the failure of his hind legs to function.

"You stay here!" he commanded savagely.

"I can't," whined a voice from the hump, "unless you get out first and let me get out."

Perry hesitated, but the curious crowd was unbearable, and unable any longer to tolerate eyes he muttered a command and with as much dignity as possible the camel moved carefully out on its four legs.

Betty was waiting for him.

"Well," she began furiously, "you see what you've done! You and that crazy license! I told you you shouldn't have gotten it! I told you!"

"My dear girl, I——"

"Don't dear-girl me! Save that for your real wife if you ever get one after this disgraceful performance."

"I——"

"And don't try to pretend it wasn't all arranged. You know you gave that coloured waiter money! You know you did! Do you mean to say you didn't try to marry me?"

"No—I mean, yes—of course——"

"Yes, you'd better admit it! You tried it, and now what are you going to do? Do you know my father's nearly crazy? It'll serve you right if he tries to kill you. He'll take his gun and put some cold steel in you. O-o-oh! Even if this marriage thing can be annulled it'll hang over me all the rest of my life!"

Perry could not resist quoting softly: "Oh, camel, wouldn't you like to belong to the pretty snake charmer for all your——"

"Shut up!" cried Betty.

There was a pause.

"Betty," said Perry finally with a very faint hopefulness, "there's only one thing to do that will really get us out clear. That's for you to marry me."

"Marry you!"

"Yes. Really it's the only——"

"You shut up! I wouldn't marry you if—if——"

"I know. If I were the last man on earth. But if you care anything about your reputation——"

"Reputation!" she cried. "You're a nice one to think about my reputation *now*. Why didn't you think about my reputation before you hired that horrible Jumbo to—to——"

Perry tossed up his hands hopelessly.

"Very well. I'll do anything you want. Lord knows I renounce all claims!"

"But," said a new voice, "I don't."

Perry and Betty started, and she put her hand to her heart.

"For heaven's sake, what was that?"

"It's me," said the camel's back.

In a minute Perry had whipped off the camel's skin, and a lax, limp object, his clothes hanging on him damply, his hand clenched tightly on an almost empty bottle, stood defiantly before them.

"Oh," cried Betty, tears starting again to her eyes, "you brought that object in here to frighten me! You told me he was deaf—that awful person!"

The ex-camel's back sat down on a chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Don't talk 'at way about me, lady. I ain't no person. I'm your husband."

"Husband!"

The cry was wrung simultaneously from Betty and Perry.

"Why, sure. I'm as much your husband as that gink is. The smoke didn't marry you to the camel's front. He married you to the whole camel. Why, that's my ring you got on your finger!"

With a little cry she snatched the ring from her finger and flung it passionately at the floor.

"What's all this?" demanded Perry dazedly.

"Jes' that you better fix me an' fix me right. If you don't I'm a-gonna have the same claim you got to bein' married to her!"

"That's bigamy," said Perry, turning gravely to Betty.

Then came the supreme moment of Perry's early life, the ultimate chance on which he risked his fortunes. He rose and looked first at Betty, where she sat weakly, her face aghast at this new complication, and then at the individual who swayed from side to side on his chair, uncertainly yet menacingly.

"Very well," said Perry slowly to the individual, "you can have her. Betty, I'm going to prove to you that as far as I'm concerned our marriage was entirely accidental. I'm going to renounce utterly my rights to have you as my wife, and give you to—to the man whose ring you wear—your lawful husband."

There was a pause and four horror-stricken eyes were turned on him.

"Good-by, Betty," he said brokenly. "Don't forget me in your new-found happiness. I'm going to leave for the Far West on the morning train. Think of me kindly, Betty."

With a last glance at them he turned on his heel and his head bowed on his chest as his hand touched the door knob.

"Good-by," he repeated. He turned the door knob.

But at these words a flying bundle of snakes and silk and tawny hair hurled itself at him.

"Oh, Perry, don't leave me! I can't face it alone! Perry, Perry, take me with you!"

Her tears rained down in a torrent and flowed damply on his neck. Calmly he folded his arms about her.

"I don't care," she cried tearfully. "I love you and if you can wake up a minister at this hour and have it done over again I'll go West with you."

Over her shoulder the front part of the camel looked at the back part of the camel—and they exchanged a particularly subtle, esoteric sort of wink that only true camels can understand.

BREAK-NECK HILL

By ESTHER FORBES

From *The Grinnell Review*

DOWN Holly Street the tide had set in for church. It was a proper, dilatory tide. Every silk-hat glistened, every shoe was blacked, the flowers on the women's hats were as fresh as the daffodils against the house fronts. Few met face to face, now and then a faster walker would catch up with acquaintances and join them or, with a flash of raised hat, bow, and pass on down the stream.

Then the current met an obstacle. A man, young and graceful and very much preoccupied, walked through the church-goers, faced in the opposite direction. His riding breeches and boots showed in spite of the loose overcoat worn to cover them. He bowed continually, like royalty from a landau, almost as mechanically, and answered the remarks that greeted him.

"Hello, Geth."

"Hello."

"Good morning, Mr. Gething. Not going to church this morning." This from a friend of his mother.

"Good morning. No, not this morning." He met a chum.

"Good riding day, eh?"

"Great."

"Well, Geth, don't break your neck."

"You bet not."

"I'll put a P. S. on the prayer for you," said the wag.

"Thanks a lot." The wag was always late—even to church on Easter morning. So Gething knew the tail of the deluge was reached and past. He had the street almost to himself. It was noticeable that the man had not once called an acquaintance by name or made the first remark. His answers had been as reflex as his walking. Geth was thinking, and in the

sombre eyes was the dumb look of a pain that would not be told—perhaps he considered it too slight.

He left Holly Street and turned into Holly Park. Here from the grass that bristled so freshly, so ferociously green, the tree trunks rose black and damp. Brown pools of water reflected a blue radiant sky through blossoming branches. Gething subsided on a bench well removed from the children and nurse maids. First he glanced at the corner of Holly Street and the Boulevard where a man from his father's racing stable would meet him with his horse. His face, his figure, his alert bearing, even his clothes promised a horse-man. The way his stirrups had worn his boots would class him as a rider. He rode with his foot "through" as the hunter, steeple chaser, and polo-player do—not on the ball of his foot in park fashion.

He pulled off his hat and ran his hand over his close-cropped head. Evidently he was still thinking. Across his face the look of pain ebbed and returned, then he grew impatient. His wrist-watch showed him his horse was late and he was in a hurry to be started, for what must be done had best be done quickly. Done quickly and forgotten, then he could give his attention to the other horses. There was Happiness—an hysterical child, and Goblin, who needed training over water jumps, and Sans Souci, whose lame leg should be cocained to locate the trouble—all of his father's stable of great thoroughbreds needed something except Cuddy, who waited only for the bullet. Gething's square brown hand went to his breeches pocket, settled on something that was cold as ice and drew it out—the revolver. The horse he had raced so many times at Iiping Rock, Brookline, Saratoga had earned the right to die by this hand which had guided him. Cuddy's high-bred face came vividly before his eyes and the white star would be the mark. He thrust the revolver back in his pocket hastily for a child had stopped to look at him, then slowly rose and fell to pacing the gravel walk. A jay screamed overhead, "Jay, jay, jay!"

"You fool," Geth called to him and then muttered to himself. "Fool, fool—oh, Geth——" From the boulevard a voice called him.

"Mr. Gething—if you please, sir——!" It was Willet the trainer.

"All right, Willet." The trainer was mounted holding a lean greyhound of a horse. Gething pulled down the stirrups.

"I meant to tell you to bring Cuddy for me to ride, last time, you know."

"Not that devil. I could never lead him in. Frenchman, here, is well behaved in cities."

Gething swung up. He sat very relaxed upon a horse. There was a lifetime of practice behind that graceful seat and manner with the reins. The horse started a low shuffling gait that would take them rapidly out of the city to the Gething country place and stables.

"You know," Geth broke silence, "Cuddy's got his—going to be shot."

"Not one of us, sir," said Willet, "but will sing Hallelujah! He kicked a hole in Muggins yesterday. None of the boys dare touch him, so he hasn't been groomed proper since your father said he was to go. It's more dangerous wipin' him off than to steeplechase the others." Geth agreed. "I know it isn't right to keep a brute like that."

"No, sir. When he was young and winning stakes it seemed different. I tell you what, we'll all pay a dollar a cake for soap made out 'er old Cuddy."

"There'll be no soap made out of old Cuddy," Gething interrupted him, "I'll ride him out—up to the top of Break-Neck Hill and shoot him there. You'd better begin the trench by noon. When it's dug I'll take him to the top and——"

"But nobody's been on his back since your father said it was useless to try to make him over. Too old for steeplechasing and too much the racer for anything else, and too much the devil to keep for a suvnor."

"Well, I'll ride him once again."

"But, Mr. Geth, he's just been standing in his box or the paddock for four weeks now. We've been waiting for you to say when he was to be shot. He's in a sweet temper and d' y'er know, I think, I do——"

"What do you think?" Willet blushed purple.

"I think Cuddy's got something in his head, some plan if he gets out. I think he wants to kill some one before he dies. Yes, sir, *kill* him. And you know if he gets the start of you there is no stopping the dirty devil."

"Yes, he does tear a bit," Geth admitted. "But I never

was on a surer jumper. Lord! How the old horse can lift you!" Gething dropped into a disconsolate silence, interrupted before long by Willet.

"Happiness will get Cuddy's box—she's in a stall. Cuddy was always mean to her—used to go out of his way to kick her—and she, sweet as a kitten."

"So you'll give her his box in revenge?"

"Revenge? Oh, no sir. Just common sense." Any thought of a sentimental revenge was distasteful to the trainer, but he was glad that good Happiness should get his box and disappointed about the soap. It would have lent relish to his somewhat perfunctory washings to say to himself, "Doubtless this here bit of soap is a piece of old Cuddy."

"How long will the trench take?"

"A good bit of time, sir. Cuddy isn't no kitten we're laying by. I'll put them gardeners on the job—with your permission—and they know how to shovel. You'll want an old saddle on him?"

"No, no, the one I've raced him in, number twelve, and his old bridle with the chain bit."

"Well, well," said Willet rubbing his veiny nose.

He considered the horse unworthy of any distinction, but in his desire to please Geth, took pains to prepare Cuddy for his death and burial. Gething was still at the big house although it was four o'clock and the men on Break-Neck Hill were busy with their digging. Willet called them the sextons.

"And we, Joey," he addressed a stable boy, "we're the undertakers. Handsome corpse, what?" Cuddy stood in the centre of the barn floor fastened to be groomed. He was handsome, built on the cleanest lines of speed and strength, lean as an anatomical study, perfect for his type. The depth of chest made his legs, neck, and head look fragile. His face was unusually beautiful—the white-starred face which had been before Geth's eyes as he had sat in Holly Park. His pricked ears strained to hear, his eyes to see. The men working over him were beneath his notice.

"Look at him," complained Joey, "he pays no more attention to us than as if we weren't here." Cuddy usually kicked during grooming, but his present indifference was more insulting.

"Huh!" said Willet. "he knows them sextons went to Break-

Neck to dig the grave for him. Don't yer, Devil? Say, Joey, look at him listening like he was counting the number of spadefuls it takes to make a horse's grave. He's thinking, old Cuddy is, and scheming what he'd like to do. I wouldn't ride him from here to Break-Neck, not for a thousand dollars." He began rapidly with the body brush on Cuddy's powerful haunch, then burst out:

"He thinks he'll be good and we'll think he's hit the sawdust trail, or perhaps he wants to look pretty in his coffin. Huh! Give me that curry. You wash off his face a bit." Cuddy turned his aristocratic face away from the wet cloth and blew tremulously. Joey tapped the blazing star on his forehead.

"Right there," he explained to Willet, "but anyhow he's begun to show his age." He pointed the muzzle which had the run forward look of an old horse and to the pits above the eyes. The grooming was finished but neither Gething came to the stable from the big house nor the trench diggers from Break-Neck to say that their work was done.

"Say, Joey," suggested Willet, "I'll do up his mane in red and yellow worsteds, like he was going to be exhibited. Red and yellow look well on a bay. You get to the paddock and see Frenchman hasn't slipped his blanket while I fetch the worsteds from the office."

Cuddy left alone, stopped his listening and began pulling at his halter. It held him firm. From the brown dusk of their box-stalls two lines of expectant horses' faces watched him. The pretty chestnut, Happiness, already had been transferred to his old box, her white striped face was barely visible. Farther down, on the same side, Goblin stood staring stupidly and beyond were the heads of the three brothers, Sans Pareil, Sans Peur and the famous Sans Souci who could clear seven feet of timber (and now was lame.) Opposite stood Bohemia, cold blood in her veins as a certain thickness about the throat testified, and little Martini, the flat racer. On either side of him were Hotspur and Meteor and there were a dozen others as famous. Above each stall was hung the brass plate giving the name and pedigree and above that up to the roof the hay was piled sweet and dusty-smelling. The barn swallows twittered by an open window in the loft. In front of Cuddy the great double doors were open to the fields

and pastures, the gray hills and the radiant sky. Cuddy reared abruptly striking out with his front legs, crouched and sprang against his halter again, but it held him fast. Willet, on returning with his worsted, found him as he had left him, motionless as a bronze horse on a black marble clock.

Willet stood on a stool the better to work on the horse's neck. His practised fingers twisted and knotted the mane and worsted, then cut the ends into hard tassels. The horse's withers were reached and the tassels bobbing rakishly gave a hilarious look to the condemned animal.

Four men, very sweaty, carrying spades entered.

"It's done," said the first, nodding, "and it's a big grave. Glad pet horses don't die oftener."

"This ain't a pet," snapped Willet. "He's just that much property and being of no more use is thrown away—just like an old tin can. No more sense in burying one than the other. If I had my way about it I'd——" But Geth entered. With his coat off he gave an impression of greater size, like Cuddy his lines were graceful enough to minimize his weight.

"Hole dug? Well, let's saddle up and start out." He did not go up to Cuddy to speak to him as he usually would have done, but as if trying to avoid him, he fell to patting Happiness's striped face. She was fretful in her new quarters. "Perhaps," thought Willet, "she knows it's old Cuddy and *he's* gone out for good." All the horses seemed nervous and unhappy. It was as if they knew that one of their number was to be taken out to an inglorious death—not the fortune to die on the turf track as a steeple-chaser might wish, but ignominiously, on a hill top, after a soft canter through spring meadows.

Cuddy stood saddled and bridled and then Willet turned in last appeal to his master's son.

"Mr. Geth, I wouldn't ride him—not even if I rode as well as you, which I don't. That horse has grown worse and worse these last months. He wants to kill some one, that's what he wants." Geth shook his head.

"No use, Willet, trying to scare me. I know what I'm doing, eh Cuddy?" He went to the horse and rubbed the base of his ears. The satin head dropped forward on to the man's chest, a rare response from Cuddy. Gething led him out of the stable, Willet held his head as the man mounted.

As he thrust his foot in the stirrup Cuddy lunged at Willet, his savage yellow teeth crushed into his shoulder. The rider pulled him off striking him with his heavy hunting whip. The horse squealed, arched himself in the air and sidled down the driveway. He did not try to run or buck, but seemed intent on twisting himself into curves and figures. The two went past the big house with its gables and numberless chimneys and down to the end of the driveway.

There is a four foot masonry wall around the Gething country-place ("farm" they call it). The horse saw it and began jerking at his bit and dancing, for ever since colt-hood walls had had but one meaning for him.

"Well, at it old man," laughed Gething. At a signal Cuddy flew at it, rose into the air with magnificent strength and landed like thistle-down.

"Cuddy," cried the man, "there never was a jumper like you. Break-Neck will keep, we'll find some more walls first." He crossed the road and entered a rough pasture. It was a day of such abounding life one could pity the worm the robin pulled. For on such a day everything seemed to have the right to live and be happy. The crows sauntered across the sky, care free as hoboes. Under foot the meadow turf oozed water, the shad-bush petals fell like confetti before the rough assault of horse and rider. Gething liked this day of wind and sunshine. In the city there had been the smell of oiled streets to show that spring had come, here was the smell of damp earth, pollen, and burnt brush. Suddenly he realized that Cuddy, too, was pleased and contented for he was going quietly now, occasionally he threw up his head and blew "Heh, heh!" through his nostrils. Strange that Willet had thought Cuddy wanted to kill some one—all he really wanted was a bit of a canter.

A brook was reached. It was wide, marshy, edged with cowslips. It would take a long jump to clear it. Gething felt the back gather beneath him, the tense body flung into the air, the flight through space, then the landing well upon the firm bank.

"Bravo, Cuddy!" the horse plunged and whipped his head between his forelegs, trying to get the reins from the rider's hands. Gething let himself be jerked forward until his face almost rested on the veiny neck.

"Old tricks, Cuddy. I knew *that* one before you wore your first shoes." He still had easy control and began to really let him out. There was a succession of walls and fences and mad racing through fields when the horse plunged in his gait and frightened birds fluttered from the thicket and Gething hissed between his teeth as he always did when he felt a horse going strong beneath him.

Then they came to a hill that rose out of green meadows. It was covered with dingy pine trees except the top that was bared like a tonsure. A trail ran through the woods; a trail singularly morose and unattractive. The pines looked shabby and black in comparison to the sun on the spring meadows. This was Break-Neck Hill. Perhaps Cuddy felt his rider stiffen in the saddle for he refused passionately to take the path. He set his will against Gething's and fought, bucking and rearing. When a horse is capable of a six foot jump into the air his great strength and agility make his bucking terrible. The broncho is a child in size and strength compared to Cuddy's race of super-horse. Twice Geth went loose in his flat saddle and once Cuddy almost threw himself. The chain bit had torn the edges of his mouth and blood coloured his froth. Suddenly he acquiesced and quiet again, he took the sombre path. Geth thrust his right hand into his pocket, the revolver was still there. His hand left it and rested on the bobbing, tasseled mane.

"Old man," he addressed the horse, "I know you don't know where you're going and I know you don't remember much, but you must remember Saratoga and how we beat them all. And Cuddy, you'd understand—if you could—how it's all over now and why I want to do it for you myself."

The woods were cleared. It was good to leave their muffled dampness for the pure sunshine of the crest. On the very top of the hill clean-cut against the sky stood a great wind-misshaped pine. At the foot of this pine was a bank of fresh earth and Gething knew that beyond the bank was the trench. He bent in his saddle and pressed his forehead against the warm neck. Before his eyes was the past they had been together, the sweep of the turf course, the grandstand a-flutter, grooms with blankets, jockeys and gentlemen in silk, owners' wives with cameras, then the race that always seemed

so short—a rush of horses, the stretching over the jumps, and the purse or not, it did not matter.

He straightened up with a grim set to his jaw and gathered the loosened reins. Cuddy went into a canter and so approached the earth bank. Suddenly he refused to advance and again the two wills fought, but not so furiously. Cuddy was shaking with fear. The bank was a strange thing, a fearsome thing, and the trench beyond, ghastly. His neck stretched forward. "Heh, heh!" he blew through his nostrils.

"Six steps nearer, Cuddy." Geth struck him lightly with his spurs. The horse paused by the bank and began rocking slightly.

"Sist! be quiet," for they were on the spot Gething wished. The horse gathered himself, started to rear, then sprang into the air, cleared earth-mound and trench and bounded down the hill. The tremendous buck-jump he had so unexpectedly taken, combined with his frantic descent, gave Gething no chance to get control until the level was reached. Then, with the first pull on the bridle, he realized it was too late. For a while at least Cuddy was in command. Gething tried all his tricks with the reins, the horse dashed on like a furious gust of wind, he whirled through the valley, across a ploughed field, over a fence and into more pastures. Gething, never cooler, fought for the control. The froth blown back against his white shirt was rosy with blood. Cuddy was beyond realizing his bit. Then Gething relaxed a little and let him go. He could guide him to a certain extent. Stop him he could not.

The horse was now running flatly and rapidly. He made no attempt to throw his rider. What jumps were in his way he took precisely. Unlike the crazed runaway of the city streets Cuddy never took better care of himself. It seemed that he was running for some purpose and Gething thought of Willet's often repeated remark, "Look at 'im—old Cuddy, he's thinking." Two miles had been covered and the gait had become business-like. Gething, guiding always to the left, was turning him in a huge circle. The horse reeked with sweat. "Now," thought Gething, "he's had enough," but at the first pressure on the bit Cuddy increased his speed. His breath caught in his throat. There was another mile and the wonderful run grew slower. The man felt the great horse trip and recover himself. He was tired out. Again the fight

between master and horse began. Cuddy resisted weakly, then threw up his beautiful, white-starred face as if in entreaty.

"Oh, I'm——" muttered Gething and let the reins lie loose on his neck, "your own way, Cuddy. Your way is better than mine. Old friend, I'll not try to stop you again." For he knew if he tried he could now gain control. The early dusk of spring had begun to settle on the surface of the fields in a hazy radiance, a marvelous light that seemed to breathe out from the earth and stream through the sky. A mile to the east upon a hill was a farm house. The orange light from the sunset found every window, blinded them and left them blank oblongs of orange. The horse and rider passed closer to this farm. Two collies rushed forward, then stopped to bark and jump. The light enveloped them and gave each a golden halo.

Again Gething turned still keeping toward the left. A hill began to rise before them and up it the horse sped, his breath whirring and rattling in his throat, but his strength still unspent. To the very top he made his way and paused dazed. "Oh, Cuddy," cried Gething, "this is Break-Neck." For there was the wind-warped pine, the bank of earth, the trench. The horse came to a shivering standstill. The bank looked strange to him. He stood sobbing, his body rocking slightly, rocking gently, then with a sigh, came slowly down on to the turf. Gething was on his feet, his hand on the dripping neck.

"You always were a bad horse and I always loved you," he whispered, "and that was a great ride, and now——" He rose abruptly and turned away as he realized himself alone in the soft twilight. The horse was dead. Then he returned to the tense body, so strangely thin and wet, and removed saddle and bridle. With these hung on his arm he took the sombre path through the pines for home.

BLACK ART AND AMBROSE

By GUY GILPATRIC

From *Collier's, The National Weekly*

" . . . The Naytives of the Seacoast told me many fearsome Tales of these Magycians, or Voodoos, as they called Them. It would seem that the Mystic Powers of these Magycians is hereditary, and that the Spells, Incantations, and other Secretts of their Proression are passed on One to the Other and holden in great Awe by the People. The Marke of this horride Culte is the Likeness of a great Human Eye, carved in the Fleshe of the Backe, which rises in Ridges as it heals and lasts Forever . . . "

—Extract from "A Truthful Accounte of a Voyage and Journey to the Land of Afrique, Together with Numerous Drawings and Mappes, and a most Humble Petition Regarding the Same."
Presented by Roberte Walting, Gent. in London, Anno D. 1651.

A FEW blocks west of the subway, and therefore off the beaten track of the average New Yorker, is San Juan Hill. If you ever happen on San Juan unawares, you will recognize it at once by its clustering family of mammoth gas houses, its streets slanting down into the North River, and the prevailing duskiness of the local complexion. If you chance to stray into San Juan after sundown, you will be relieved to note that policemen are plentiful, and that they walk in pairs. This last observation describes the social status of San Juan or any other neighbourhood better than volumes of detailed episodes could begin to do.

Of late years many of the Fust Famblies of San Juan have migrated northward to the teeming negro districts of Harlem, but enough of the old stock remains to lend the settlement its time-honoured touch of gloom. Occasionally, too, it still makes its way to the public notice by sanguinary affrays and race riots. San Juan Hill is a geographical, racial, and sociological fact, and will remain so until the day when safety razors become a universal institution.

San Juan is a community in itself. It has its churches, its clubs, its theatres, its stores, and—sighs of relief from the

police—it *used* to have its saloons. It is a cosmopolitan community, too—as cosmopolitan as it can be and still retain its Senegambian motif.

Negroes from Haiti, Jamaica, Salvador, Cuba; from Morocco and Senegal; blue-black negroes from the Pacific; ebony negroes from the South; brown, tan, yellow, and buff negroes from everywhere inhabit San Juan. Every language from Arabic to Spanish is spoken by these—the cosmopolites of cosmopolitan San Juan.

Pussonally, Mr. Ambrose de Vere Travis spoke only English. Because he hailed from Galveston, Tex., he spoke it with a Gulf intonation at once liquid, rich, and musical. He stood six feet five on his bare soles, so his voice was somewhat reminiscent of the Vatican organ.

Ambrose was twenty-four years old. Our story finds him a New Yorker of three years' standing, all of which he had spent as a dweller on San Juan Hill. Originally the giant Mr. Travis had served as furnace tender in the subterraneous portions of the Swalecliffe Arms apartments, that turreted edifice in the Eighties that frowns across at the Palisades from Riverside Drive. But his size and the size of his smile had won for Ambrose the coveted and uniformed position of doorman, a post at which he served with considerable success and the incidental tips.

The recently wealthy Mr. Braumbauer, for instance, really felt that he *was* somebody, when Ambrose opened the door of his car and bowed him under the portcullis of Swalecliffe. And y'understand me, a feller's willing he should pay a little something for service once in a while. And so, one way and another, Ambrose managed to eke from his job a great deal more than he drew on pay day.

But Mr. Travis's source of income did not stop there—far from it. He had brought from Galveston a genius for rolling sevens—or, if he missed seven the first roll, he could generally make his point within the next three tries. He could hold the dice longer than any man within the San Juan memory, which, in view of the fact that craps is to San Juan what bridge is to Boston, is saying a great deal. Ambrose was simply a demon with the bones, and he was big enough to get away with it.

True, there had been difficulties.

One evening at the Social Club Ambrose held the dice for a straight sixteen passes. He and five other courtiers of fortune were bounding the ivories off the cushion of a billiard table, to the end that the contest be one of chance and not of science. In the midst of Ambrose's stentorian protests that the baby needed footwear, one of the losers forgot his breeding to the extent of claiming that Ambrose had introduced a loaded die. As he seconded his claims with a razor, the game met a temporary lull.

When the furniture had ceased crashing, the members of the club emerged from beneath the pool tables to see Mr. Travis tying up a slashed hand, while he of the razor lay moaning over a broken shoulder and exuding teeth in surprising quantities.

After this little incident no one ever so far forgot himself as to breathe the faintest aspersion on Mr. Travis, his dice, his way of throwing them down or of picking them up.

It was generally conceded that his conduct throughout the fray had been of the best, and the affair did much to raise him in popular esteem—especially as he was able to prove the cavalier's charges to be utterly unfounded.

And so, with his physical beauty, his courage, and his wealth, Mr. Ambrose de Vere Travis became something of a figure in San Juan's social circles.

Just when Ambrose fell in love with Miss Aphrodite Tate is not quite clear.

Aphrodite (pronounced just as spelled) was so named because her father thought it had something to do with Africa. She was astoundingly, absolutely, and gratifyingly black, and Ambrose was sure that he had never seen any one quite so beautiful.

Aphrodite lived with her parents, the ancient and revered Fremont-Tates, patroons of San Juan. In the daytime she was engaged as maid by a family that *suttlingly* treated her lovely; while in the evening she could usually be found at the St. Benedict Young People's Club. And it was here that Ambrose met her.

True love ran smoothly for a long time. At last, when he felt the time was ripe, Ambrose pleaded urgent business for two evenings and shook down the Social Club dice fanciers for the price of the ring.

Then Mr. Dominique Raffin loomed dark on the horizon. Mr. Raffin did not loom as dark as he might have loomed, however, because he was half white. He hailed from Haiti, and was the son of a French sailor and a transplanted Congo wench. He was slight of build and shift of eye. His excuse for being was a genius for music. He could play anything, could this pasty Dominique, but of all instruments he was at his tuneful best on the alto saxophone.

"Lawd! *Oh*, Lawd!" his audience would ejaculate, as with closed eyes and heads thrown back they would drink in the sonorous emanations from the brazen tube. "Dat's de horn ob de Angel Gabriel—dat's de heavenly music ob de spears!" And so Dominique's popularity grew among the ladies of San Juan, even if among the gentlemen it did not.

To tell the truth, Dominique was something of a beau. Because he played in an orchestra, he had ample opportunity to study the deportment of people who passed as fashionable. His dress was immaculate; his hair was not so kinky that it couldn't be plastered down with brilliantine, and he perfumed himself copiously. His fingers were heavily laden with rings. Dominique's voice was whining—irritating.

His native tongue was French, but he had learned to speak English in Jamaica. Thus his accent was a curious mixture of French and Cockney, lubricated with oily African.

Altogether, it is not to be wondered that such sturdy sons of Ham as Ambrose disliked the snaky Mr. Raffin. Disliked him the more when his various musical and cultural accomplishments made him a general favourite with the ladies. And then, when he absolutely cut Mr. Travis from the affections of Miss Tate, the wrath of the blacker and more wholesome San Jaun citizens knew no bounds.

As for Ambrose—he sulked. Even his friends, the fur-lined tenants of Swalecliffe Arms, noticed that something worried the swart guardian of their gate. In the evenings Ambrose gave his entire time to frenzied rolling of the bones and was surprised to see that here, at least, luck had not deserted him.

On the few occasions when he forsook the green baize for an evening's dancing at the St. Benedict Young People's Guild, the sight of the coveted Miss Aphrodite whirling in the arms of the hated Raffin almost overcame him.

Finally the lovesick Mr. Travis decided to call upon the lady of his heart and demand an explanation. After some rehearsal of what he wanted to say, Ambrose betook himself to the tenement in which the Tate family dwelt. At sight of her cast-off swain, Miss Aphrodite showed the whites of her eyes and narrowed her lips to a thin straight line—perhaps an inch and a half thin. Evidently she was displeased.

Aphrodite opened the interview by inquiring why she was being pestered and intermediated by a low-down black nigger that didn't have no mo' brains than he had manners. Her feelings was likely to git the better of her at any moment; in which event Mr. Travis had better watch out, that was all—jest watch out.

The astounded Mr. Travis did his best to pacify this Amazon; to explain that he had merely come to inquire the reason for her displeasure; to learn in what respect Mr. Raffin had proved himself so sweetly desirable.

The answer was brief and crushing. It seemed that where Mr. Travis was a big, bulky opener of doors, Mr. Raffin was a sleek and cultured Chesterfield—a musician—an artist. Where Mr. Travis could not dance without stepping on everybody in the room, Mr. Raffin was a veritable Mordkin. Where Mr. Travis hung out with a bunch of no-good crap-shooting black buck niggers, Mr. Raffin's orchestral duties brought him into the most cultured s'ciety. In short, the yellow man from Haiti was a gentleman; the black man from Texas was a boor.

This unexpected tirade made the unhappy Ambrose a trifle weak in the knees. Then pride came to the rescue, and he drew himself to his full and towering six feet five. He held out his mammoth hands before Miss Aphrodite and warned her that with them, at the first provocation, he would jest take and bust Mr. Raffin in two. This done, he would throw the shuddering fragments into the street, and with his feet—Exhibit B—would kick them the entire length and breadth of the neighbourhood.

This threat only aroused new fires of scorn and vituperation, and Miss Tate informed her guest that, should he ever attempt the punitive measures described, Mr. Raffin would cut him up into little pieces. It seemed that Mr. Raffin carried a knife, and that he knew how to use it.

Mr. Travis snorted at this, and stamped out of the Tate apartment.

At his exit, doors closed softly on every floor, because the neighbours had listened to the tête-à-tête with intense interest. Even people in the next house had been able to hear most of it.

Ambrose made his furious way toward the Social Club, his mind set on mortal encounter with the hated Dominique. But—here was an inspiration!—why not win his money away from him first? To win away his last cent—to humble him—to ruin him—and then to break him in two and kick the pieces through the San Juan causeways, as per programme! This would be a revenge indeed!

Ambrose noted with satisfaction that Mr. Raffin was already at play, and crossing the smoke-filled room he threw down some money and took his place in the game.

Now, Mr. Travis was ordinarily a very garrulous and vociferous crap shooter, but to-night he was savagely silent. There was a disturbing, electric *something* in the air that the neutrals felt and feared. There was a look in the Travis eye that boded ill for somebody, and one by one the more prudent gamblers withdrew.

Then suddenly the storm broke.

Later accounts were not clear as to just what started the fray, but start it did.

Dominique's knife appeared from some place, and the table crashed. Then the knife swished through space like a hornet and buried its point harmlessly in a door across the room.

What followed is still a subject of wondering conversation on San Juan Hill.

It seems that Mr. Travis seized Mr. Raffin by the collar of his coat, and swung him round and round and over his head. Mr. Raffin streamed almost straight out, like the imitation airplanes that whirl dizzily about the tower in an amusement park. Suddenly there was a rending of cloth, and Dominique shot through the air to encounter the wall with a soul-satisfying thump.

Ambrose looked bewildered at the torn clothing he held in his hand, and then at the limp form of his late antagonist. Mr. Raffin lay groaning, naked from the waist up.

Ambrose strode across to administer further chastisement,

but was halted by a cry from one of the onlookers. This man stood pointing at Dominique's naked back—pointing, and staring with eyes that rolled with genuine negro terror.

"Look!" gasped the affrighted one. "Look! It's de Voodoo Eye—*dat man's a witch!* Ambrose, fo' de Lawd's sake, git away from hyar!"

"What you-all talkin' about?" scoffed Ambrose, striding closer, and rolling Dominique so that the light shone full on his back. "What you-all talkin'—— *Good Lawd!*"

This last ejaculation from Ambrose was caused by the sight that met his gaze.

There, on the yellow back before him, reaching from shoulder to shoulder, was tattooed the likeness of a great human eye!

Everyone saw it now. To some—the Northern darkies—it meant nothing. But to the old-school Southern negroes it meant mystery—magic—death. *It was the sign of the Voodoo!*

Several of the more superstitious onlookers retreated in poor order, their teeth chattering. Their mammies had told them about the Voodoo Eye. They remembered the tales whispered in the slave quarters about people being prayed to death by these baleful creatures of ill omen! They weren't going to take any chances!

Ambrose, for all his natural courage, was shaken. He remembered old Tom Blue, the Texas Voodoo, who poisoned twenty-one people and came to life after the white men lynched him. And now he had laid rough hands on one of the deadly clan; had brought upon himself the wrath of a man who could simply *wish* him to death!

Trembling, he stooped down and looked at the Devil's Sign. He looked again—closely. Then he broke out into a ringing peal of wholesome darky laughter.

"Git up!" he shouted, as Dominique showed signs of life. "Git up, Mr. Voodoo, befo' Ah gits impatient an' throws you out de window!"

This recklessness—this defiance of the dread power—shocked even the least superstitious of the audience. By this time they were all under the spell of this mysterious mark. Those who hadn't recognized it at once had been quickly enlightened by the others.

Ambrose seized Dominique by the shoulder and dragged

him to his feet. Swaying unsteadily, the mulatto looked around him through eyes closed to snakelike slits.

"Raffin," said Ambrose, "you-all has on yo' back de Eye ob Voodoo. Dese gennlemen hyar thinks yo' is a Voodoo. Ah know yo' *ain't!*"

"I *am* a Voodoo! An' you, you *sacré cochon*," hissed Raffin, "I'll make you wish you had nevaire been born!"

"Well, jes' fo' de present," laughed Ambrose, good humour spreading all over his face, "you-all had better git outa my way, an' stay *out!* Git outa hyar *quick!*"

Dominique, his evil face twitching with fury, picked up the ragged shreds of his coat and walked unsteadily out.

At his exit a dead silence fell upon the remaining members. Then they gathered together in excited groups and discussed the incident in heated undertones. Ambrose, quite unconcerned, took up a pack of cards and commenced a game of solitaire.

He wasn't worrying. He knew that Dominique was no more a Voodoo than he was. Startled at first, he had noticed that the eye had not been carved in Dominique's back, as it should have been, but had been tattooed. This in itself made the thing doubtful. But more than this, the marks were the unmistakably accurate work of an electric tattooing machine.

Ambrose had spent his youth on the Galveston water front, and knew tattooing in all its forms. Electric tattooing on a Voodoo was about as much in keeping with the ancient and awesome dignity of the cult as spangled tights would be on the King of England. No—it was ridiculous. Dominique was not a Voodoo!

Ambrose continued his solitaire, humming as he played. Occasionally he cast an amused eye at the excited groups across the room, and was not surprised when Mr. Behemoth Scott, president of the club, at last came over to him.

"Mistah Travis," began Mr. Scott deferentially, clearing his throat, "would you-all be good enough to jine our little gatherin' while we confabulate on dis hyar recent contabulaneous incident?"

"Suttingly, Mr. Scott, suttingly!" said Ambrose, pushing back his chair, and crossing the room with the quaking official. "What can Ah do fo' you-all?"

"Well, jest this," said Mr. Scott. "You gennlemen kin'ly

correc' me or bear out what Ah say. Leavin' aside all argument whether they *is* sech things as Voodooos, Ah guess any of you gennlemen from the South will remember Aunt Belle Agassiz and Tom Blue. Ah guess yo' mammies all done tole 'bout the African Voodooos, an' how ebery now an' den one of 'em crops up still. An' Ah guess dat we've seen to-night dat we've got a Voodoo among us. Now, Mr. Travis"—here he turned to Ambrose—"we know what Aunt Belle Agassiz done on de Mathis Plantation in Georgia—you ought to know what Tom Blue did in Texas. So we wants to warn you, as a fren' an' membah of dis club in good standin', dat you better leave town to-night."

An assenting murmur arose from the crowd, with much rolling of eyes and nodding of heads.

Ambrose held up his hand for silence. A serious expression came over his features, and he towered tall and straight before them.

"Gennlemen," he said, "Ah sho appreciates yo' good sperit in dis hyar unfo'tunate affair. But Ah tells you-all hyar an' now dat Dominique Raffin ain't no mo' Voodoo den Ah is. Now, Ah ain't sayin' dat he *ain't* a Voodoo, an' Ah ain't sayin' dat Ah *am* one. All Ah says is dat Ah's as *much* of a Voodoo as he is—an' Ah'm willin' to prove it!"

"How you-all do dat, Ambrose?" asked somebody.

"Ah'm comin' to dat," replied Ambrose. "If you-all wants to decide dis mattah beyont all doubt, Ah respekt'ly suggests dat we hold a *see-ance* in dis hyar room, under any c'nditions dat you-all kin d'vise. If Ah cain't show yo mo' supernat'ral man'festations dan he can, Ah gives him fifty dollahs. If it's de oder way 'roun', he leaves de city within twenty-fo' hours. Is dat fair?"

"Well, it suttinly soun's puff'cly jest," replied Mr. Scott. "We-all will appint a committee to frame de rules of de *see-ance*, an' make 'em fair fo' both. You's been willin' to prove yo'-se'f, Ambrose, an' yo' couldn't do mo'. If dis m'latter Voodoo don't want to do lak'wise, he can leave dese pahs moughty sudden. Ain't dat so, gennlemen?"

"Yassuh—he'll leave *quick*!" was the threatening reply.

"All right den, Ambrose," continued the spokesman, "we'll 'range fo' dis sperit-summonin' contes' jes' as soon as we kin. We'll have it nex' Satiddy night at lates'. Meanwhile we-all

is moughty obleeged to yo' for yo' willin'-ness to do de right thing."

The great night arrived, and San Juan, dressed in its gala finery, wended its chattering way to the Senegambian séance. But beneath the finery and the chatter ran a subtle undercurrent of foreboding, for your negro is superstitious, and, well, *Voodoos are Voodoos!*

Dominique Raffin, dressed in somber black, went to the club alone and unattended save by Miss Aphrodite Tate. San Juan, fearing the Raffin mulatto and his ghostly powers, had held its respectful distance ever since the evening when Ambrose and his rage had revealed them. Familiarity breeding contempt, Miss Aphrodite knew her man, and feared him not.

They found the rooms of the social club full of excited negroes, for never before in San Juan's history had such a momentous event been scheduled. Raffin and Aphrodite were received with a fearsome respect by Behemoth Scott, who had been appointed master of ceremonies.

"Jes' make yo'se'f to home," he greeted them. "Mista Travis ain't come yit; we has ten minutes befo' de contes' styarts."

At last, with a bare minute to spare, Ambrose smilingly entered. He wore his splendid full-dress suit, a wonderful creation of San Juan's leading tailor, who, at Ambrose's tasteful suggestion, had faced the lapels with satin of the most royal purple. Set out by this background of colourful lapel was a huge yellow chrysanthemum, while on the broad red band that diagonally traversed his shining shirt front glittered like a decoration, the insignia from his Swalecliffe uniform cap.

"Good evenin', folks," was his cheerful greeting. "If you-all is quite ready fo' dis *see-ance*, an' provided mah—er—wuthy opponent am ready, Ah'd jes' as soon *proceed*."

Miss Aphrodite gazed on the imposing figure of Ambrose with more than a little admiration. Comparing him with the trembling Raffin, she found much in his favour.

All but his footwear. Accustomed as she had become to the glistening patent leathers affected by Raffin, Ambrose's clumsy congress gaiters somewhat marred his gorgeousness. Nevertheless, she felt her affections wavering. Her specula-

tions were interrupted by the voice of the master of ceremonies:

"Ladies an' gennlemen," began Mr. Scott, "we-all has d'cided to form a circle of twelve of our membahs wif dese two Voodoo gennlemen asettin' opp'site each oder in de circle. In o'dah to preclude any poss'bility of either Mista Travis or Mista Raffin from leavin' dere places, we has d'cided to tie dem to dere cheers by ropes passed 'roun' dere bodies an' fastened to de backs of de cheers. De lights will den be distinguished. When he lights is tu'ned out, Mista Raffin will be given fifteen minutes in which to summon de supernat'ral proofs—whatevah dey may be—of his bein' Voodoo. Den Mista Travis will be given his chanct."

Amid the hushed whisperings of the assemblage the committee, six men and six women, Aphrodite included, took their places in the circle. Ambrose and the mulatto were seated opposite each other and were perhaps twelve feet apart. Raffin, nervously licking his lips, sat bolt upright while members of the committee passed ropes around him and the back of his chair, and tied his hands. In direct contrast to his rival, Ambrose slouched down in his seat and joked with the trembling members as they secured him in his place.

Those not on the committee crowded close to the chair backs of the circle in order that nothing should escape them. The excitement was tense, and everyone was breathing hard. When all was ready Mr. Behemoth Scott took his place in the circle. Drawing a long breath and grasping his chair for support, he spoke in a hushed and husky voice: "All raidy, now? Ah asks silence from eve'body. *Turn out de lights!*"

At the fateful words Stygian darkness enveloped the crowded room. The shades had been drawn and not the faintest ray from the dim street lights penetrated the place. It was stifling hot, and the assembled investigators were perspiring freely.

Silence—black, awe-inspired silence! Two hundred pairs of superstitious eyes peered into the horrible gloom—two hundred pairs of ears strained at the tomblike stillness. The suspense was awful, and none dared move. Occasionally some familiar sound came from the world outside: the clang of the Tenth Avenue car or the whistle of a tugboat out in the river, but these sounds were of another existence—they

seemed distant and unfamiliar and wholly out of place in the mystery and terror of the Voodoo seance.

The minutes slid by, and nothing happened. The suspense was worse than ever. Something stirred in the circle. Two hundred hearts missed a beat. Then the whining, terror-stricken voice of the mulatto broke the stillness: "Let Travis try," he whispered hoarsely. "My spirits will not come until 'e 'as tried. Let 'im try fo' fifteen minutes, and when 'e 'as failed I will summon the ghost of Bula-Wayo, the king of all the tribes of the Niger. But let Travis try first!" This last almost pleadingly.

A moment more of silence and Ambrose's deep voice boomed forth in the darkness.

"Ah's willin'," he declared. "Anythin' dat now appears will be mah doin'—ten minits is all Ah asks. Am dat sat'sfact'ry?"

"Yaas," replied the voice of Behemoth Scott. "Go ahaid wif yo' sperit-summonin', Mista Travis."

"Ah'll cawncentrate now," replied Ambrose, "an' sho'tly you-all will witness ample proof of mah bein' a genuine Voodoo. *Ah's stahin'.*"

Silence more terrible than ever fell upon the waiting negroes. Then—horror of horrors! a peculiar grating, rustling sound came from the vicinity of Ambrose—a slight creaking—and again silence. The investigators held hands of neighbours who trembled from sheer panic, whose breath came hard and panting from this awful suspense!

Another creaking, as though Ambrose had shifted his weight in his chair. . . .

Then—baleful—in its green, ghastly glow—a dim, indistinct light shone in the centre of the circle! Moving slowly, like a newly awakened spirit, it waved in the very midst of the gasping committee. Back and forth, up and down, it moved—glowing, vaporous, ghostly. Two hundred pairs of bulging eyes saw the horror—and realized that it was an enormous hand, terribly deformed!

Some one moaned with terror—a woman screamed. "De hand ob death!" shrieked a man. "Run—run fo' yo' lives!"

The stampede was spontaneous! Chairs were overturned and tables smashed in this frightful panic in the dark. No

one thought of turning on the lights—everyone's sole aim was to leave that appalling shining hand—and get out!

A crashing on the stairway marked where Raffin, chair and all, was making his fear-stricken way to the street. In one brief minute the place was apparently empty save for Ambrose. Still tied to his chair, he inquired: "Is any one hyar?"

For a second there was silence, then the dulcet tones of Miss Aphrodite fell on the big negro's ear: "Ah's hyar, Ambrose," she said.

"Well, den"—recognizing her voice—"would you mine lightin' de gas till Ah can tie mahself loose from dis hyar throne ob glory?"

In a moment a feeble gaslight shone, disclosing Aphrodite—somewhat disarranged by the panic—standing smiling in front of the erstwhile Voodoo. She looked down at his feet. There, sure enough, one huge member was unshod and stockingless; the elastic-slit congress gaiter, lost in the shuffle, lay out of the radius of Ambrose's long leg. Miss Aphrodite picked it up and, stooping, slipped it over his mighty toes, noticing as she did so the thick coating of phosphorescent paint that still covered them.

"Ambrose," she whispered, "Ah wasn't scaired. No ghos' eber was bohn dat had han's de size ob yo' feet!"

An embarrassed silence followed; the gas jet flickered weakly; then Ambrose said: "Untie mah han's, Aphrodite—Ah'd jes' lak to hug you!"

"Oh, Ambrose," she cried coyly. But she untied the rope just the same.

Again came silence, broken only by a certain strange sound. Then Ambrose's voice came softly through the gloom: "Aphrodite," it said, "yo' lips am jes' lak plush!"

THE JUDGMENT OF VULCAN

By LEE FOSTER HARTMAN

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TO DINE on the veranda of the Marine Hotel is the one delightful surprise which Port Charlotte affords the adventurer who has broken from the customary paths of travel in the South Seas. On an eminence above the town, solitary and aloof like a monastery, and deep in its garden of lemon-trees, it commands a wide prospect of sea and sky. By day, the Pacific is a vast stretch of blue, flat like a floor, with a blur of distant islands on the horizon—chief among them Muloa, with its single volcanic cone tapering off into the sky. At night, this smithy of Vulcan becomes a glow of red, throbbing faintly against the darkness, a capricious and sullen beacon immeasurably removed from the path of men. Viewed from the veranda of the Marine Hotel, its vast flare on the horizon seems hardly more than an insignificant spark, like the glowing cigar-end of some guest strolling in the garden after dinner.

It may very likely have been my lighted cigar that guided Eleanor Stanleigh to where I was sitting in the shadows. Her uncle, Major Stanleigh, had left me a few minutes before, and I was glad of the respite from the queer business he had involved me in. The two of us had returned that afternoon from Muloa, where I had taken him in my schooner, the *Sylph*, to seek out Leavitt and make some inquiries—very important inquiries, it seemed, in Miss Stanleigh's behalf.

Three days in Muloa, under the shadow of the grim and flame-throated mountain, while I was forced to listen to Major Stanleigh's persistent questionnaire and Leavitt's erratic and garrulous responses—all this, as I was to discover later, at the instigation of the Major's niece—had made me frankly curious about the girl.

I had seen her only once, and then at a distance across the veranda, one night when I had been dining there with a friend; but that single vision of her remained vivid and unforgettable—a tall girl of a slender shapeliness, crowned by a mass of reddish-gold hair that smoldered above the clear olive pallor of her skin. With that flawless and brilliant colouring she was marked for observation—had doubtless been schooled to a perfect indifference to it, for the slow, almost indolent, grace of her movements was that of a woman coldly unmindful of the gazes lingering upon her. She could not have been more than twenty-six or -seven, but I got an unmistakable impression of weariness or balked purpose emanating from her in spite of her youth and glorious physique. I looked up to see her crossing the veranda to join her uncle and aunt—correct, well-to-do English people that one placed instantly—and my stare was only one of many that followed her as she took her seat and threw aside the light scarf that swathed her bare and gleaming shoulders.

My companion, who happened to be the editor of the local paper, promptly informed me regarding her name and previous residence—the gist of some “social item” which he had already put into print; but these meant nothing, and I could only wonder what had brought her to such an out-of-the-way part of the world as Port Charlotte. She did not seem like a girl who was traveling with her uncle and aunt; one got rather the impression that she was bent on a mission of her own and was dragging her relatives along because the conventions demanded it. I hazarded to my companion the notion that a woman like Miss Stanleigh could have but one of two purposes in this lonely part of the world—she was fleeing from a lover or seeking one.

“In that case,” rejoined my friend, with the cynical shrug of the newspaper man, “she has very promptly succeeded. It’s whispered that she is going to marry Joyce—of Malduna Island, you know. Only met him a fortnight ago. Quite a romance, I’m told.”

I lifted my eyebrows at that, and looked again at Miss Stanleigh. Just at that instant she happened to look up. It was a wholly indifferent gaze; I am confident that she was no more aware of me than if I had been one of the veranda posts which her eyes had chanced to encounter. But in the indescribable

sensation of that moment I felt that here was a woman who bore a secret burden, although, as my informing host put it, her heart had romantically found its haven only two weeks ago.

She was endeavouring to get trace of a man named Farquharson, as I was permitted to learn a few days later. Ostensibly, it was Major Stanleigh who was bent on locating this young Englishman—Miss Stanleigh's interest in the quest was guardedly withheld—and the trail had led them a pretty chase around the world until some clue, which I never clearly understood, brought them to Port Charlotte. The major's immediate objective was an eccentric chap named Leavitt who had marooned himself in Muloa. The island offered an ideal retreat for one bent on shunning his own kind, if he did not object to the close proximity of a restive volcano. Clearly, Leavitt did not. He had a scientific interest in the phenomena exhibited by volcanic regions and was versed in geological lore, but the rumours about Leavitt—practically no one ever visited Muloa—did not stop at that. And, as Major Stanleigh and I were to discover, the fellow seemed to have developed a genuine affection for Lakalatcha, as the smoking cone was called by the natives of the adjoining islands. From long association he had come to know its whims and moods as one comes to know those of a petulant woman one lives with. It was a bizarre and preposterous intimacy, in which Leavitt seemed to find a wholly acceptable substitute for human society, and there was something repellant about the man's eccentricity. He had various names for the smoking cone that towered a mile or more above his head: "Old Flame-eater," or "Lava-spitter," he would at times familiarly and irreverently call it; or, again, "The Maiden Who Never Sleeps," or "The Single-breasted Virgin"—these last, however, always in the musical Malay equivalent. He had no end of names—romantic, splenetic, of opprobrium, or outright endearment—to suit, I imagine, Lakalatcha's varying moods. In one respect they puzzled me—they were of conflicting genders, some feminine and some masculine, as if in Leavitt's loose-frayed imagination the mountain that beguiled his days and disturbed his nights were hermaphroditic.

Leavitt as a source of information regarding the missing Farquharson seemed proposterous when one reflected how out

of touch with the world he had been, but, to my astonishment, Major Stanleigh's clue was right, for he had at last stumbled upon a man who had known Farquharson well and who was voluminous about him—quite willingly so. With the *Sylph* at anchor, we lay off Muloa for three nights, and Leavitt gave us our fill of Farquharson, along with innumerable digressions about volcanoes, neoplatonism, the Single Tax, and what not. There was no keeping Leavitt to a coherent narrative about the missing Farquharson. He was incapable of it, and Major Stanleigh and myself had simply to wait in patience while Leavitt, delighted to have an audience, dumped out for us the fantastic contents of his mind, odd vagaries, recondite trash, and all. He was always getting away from Farquharson, but, then, he was unfailingly bound to come back to him. We had only to wait and catch the solid grains that now and then fell in the winnowing of that unending stream of chaff. It was a tedious and exasperating process, but it had its compensations. At times Leavitt could be as uncannily brilliant as he was dull and boresome. The conviction grew upon me that he had become a little demented, as if his brain had been tainted by the sulphurous fumes exhaled by the smoking crater above his head. His mind smoked, flickered, and flared like an unsteady lamp, blown upon by choking gases, in which the oil had run low.

But of the wanderer Farquharson he spoke with precision and authority, for he had shared with Farquharson his bungalow there in Muloa—a period of about six months, it seemed—and there Farquharson had contracted a tropic fever and died.

"Well, at last we have got all the facts," Major Stanleigh sighed with satisfaction when the *Sylph* was heading back to Port Charlotte. Muloa, lying astern, we were no longer watching. Leavitt, at the water's edge, had waved us a last good-by and had then abruptly turned back into the forest, very likely to go clambering like a demented goat up the flanks of his beloved volcano and to resume poking about in its steaming fissures—an occupation of which he never tired.

"The evidence is conclusive, don't you think?—the grave, Farquharson's personal effects, those pages of the poor devil's diary."

I nodded assent. In my capacity as owner of the *Sylph* I had merely undertaken to furnish Major Stanleigh with pas-

sage to Muloa and back, but the events of the last three days had made me a party to the many conferences, and I was now on terms of something like intimacy with the rather stiff and pompous English gentleman. How far I was from sharing his real confidence I was to discover later when Eleanor Stanleigh gave me hers.

"My wife and niece will be much relieved to hear all this—a family matter, you understand, Mr. Barnaby," he had said to me when we landed. "I should like to present you to them before we leave Port Charlotte for home."

But, as it turned out, it was Eleanor Stanleigh who presented herself, coming upon me quite unexpectedly that night after our return while I sat smoking in the shadowy garden of the Marine Hotel. I had dined with the major, after he had explained that the ladies were worn out by the heat and general developments of the day and had begged to be excused. And I was frankly glad not to have to endure another discussion of the deceased Farquharson, of which I was heartily tired after hearing little else for the last three days. I could not help wondering how the verbose and pompous major had paraphrased and condensed that inchoate mass of biography and reminiscence into an orderly account for his wife and niece. He had doubtless devoted the whole afternoon to it. Sitting under the cool green of the lemon-trees, beneath a sky powdered with stars, I reflected that I, at least, was done with Farquharson forever. But I was not, for just then Eleanor Stanleigh appeared before me.

I was startled to hear her addressing me by name, and then calmly begging me to resume my seat on the bench under the arbor. She sat down also, her flame-coloured hair and bare shoulders gleaming in the darkness. She was the soul of directness and candour, and after a thoughtful, searching look into my face she came to the point at once. She wanted to hear about Farquharson—from me.

"Of course, my uncle has given me a very full account of what he learned from Mr. Leavitt, and yet many things puzzle me—this Mr. Leavitt most of all."

"A queer chap," I epitomized him. "Frankly, I don't quite make him out, Miss Stanleigh—marooning himself on that infernal island and seemingly content to spend his days there."

"Is he so old?" she caught me up quickly.

"No, he isn't," I reflected. "Of course, it's difficult to judge ages out here. The climate, you know. Leavitt's well under forty, I should say. But that's a most unhealthy spot he has chosen to live in."

"Why does he stay there?"

I explained about the volcano. "You can have no idea what an obsession it is with him. There isn't a square foot of its steaming, treacherous surface that he hasn't been over, mapping new fissures, poking into old lava-beds, delving into the crater itself on favourable days——"

"Isn't it dangerous?"

"In a way, yes. The volcano itself is harmless enough. It smokes unpleasantly now and then, splutters and rumbles as if about to obliterate all creation, but for all its bluster it only manages to spill a trickle or two of fresh lava down its sides—just tamely subsides after deluging Leavitt with a shower of cinders and ashes. But Leavitt won't leave it alone. He goes poking into the very crater, half strangling himself in its poisonous fumes, scorching the shoes off his feet, and once, I believe, he lost most of his hair and eyebrows—a narrow squeak. He throws his head back and laughs at any word of caution. To my notion, it's foolhardy to push a scientific curiosity to that extreme."

"Is it, then, just scientific curiosity?" mused Miss Stanleigh.

Something in her tone made me stop short. Her eyes had lifted to mine—almost appealingly, I fancied. Her innocence, her candour, her warm beauty, which was like a pale phosphorescence in the starlit darkness—all had their potent effect upon me in that moment. I felt impelled to a sudden burst of confidence.

"At times I wonder. I've caught a look in his eyes, when he's been down on his hands and knees, staring into some infernal vent-hole—a look that is—well, uncanny, as if he were peering into the bowels of the earth for something quite outside the conceptions of science. You might think that volcano had worked some spell over him, turned his mind. He prattles to it or storms at it as if it were a living creature. Queer, yes; and he's impressive, too, with a sort of magnetic personality that attracts and repels you violently at the same

time. He's like a cake of ice dipped in alcohol and set aflame. I can't describe him. When he talks——"

"Does he talk about himself?"

I had to confess that he had told us practically not a word. He had discussed everything under heaven in his brilliant, erratic way, with a fleer of cynicism toward it all, but he had left himself out completely. He had given us Farquharson with relish, and in infinite detail, from the time the poor fellow first turned up in Muloa, put ashore by a native craft. Talking about Farquharson was second only to his delight in talking about volcanoes. And the result for me had been innumerable vivid but confused impressions of the young Englishman who had by chance invaded Leavitt's solitude and had lingered there, held by some attraction, until he sickened and died. It was like a jumbled mosaic put together again by inexperienced hands.

"Did you get the impression that the two men had very much in common?"

"Quite the contrary," I answered. "But Major Stanleigh should know——"

"My uncle never met Mr. Farquharson."

I was fairly taken aback at that, and a silence fell between us. It was impossible to divine the drift of her questions. It was as if some profound mistrust weighed upon her and she was not so much seeking to interrogate me as she was groping blindly for some chance word of mine that might illuminate her doubts.

I looked at the girl in silent wonder, yes, and in admiration of her bronze and ivory beauty in the full flower of her glorious youth—and I thought of Joyce. I felt that it was like her to have fallen in love simply but passionately at the mere lifting of the finger of Fate. It was only another demonstration of the unfathomable mystery, or miracle, which love is. Joyce was lucky, indeed favoured of the gods, to have touched the spring in this girl's heart which no other man could reach, and by the rarest of chances—her coming out to this remote corner of the world. Lucky Joyce! I knew him slightly—a straightforward young fellow, very simple and whole-souled, enthusiastically absorbed in developing his rubber lands in Malduna.

Miss Stanleigh remained lost in thought while her fingers

toyed with the pendant of the chain that she wore. In the darkness I caught the glitter of a small gold cross.

"My. Barnaby," she finally broke the silence, and paused. "I have decided to tell you something. This Mr. Farquharson was my husband."

Again a silence fell, heavy and prolonged, in which I sat as if drugged by the night air that hung soft and perfumed about us. It seemed incredible that in that fleeting instant she had spoken at all.

"I was young—and very foolish, I suppose."

With that confession, spoken with simple dignity, she broke off again. Clearly, some knowledge of the past she deemed it necessary to impart to me. If she halted over her words, it was rather to dismiss what was irrelevant to the matter in hand, in which she sought my counsel.

"I did not see him for four years—did not wish to. . . . And he vanished completely. . . . Four years!—just a welcome blank!"

Her shoulders lifted and a little shiver went over her.

"But even a blank like that can become unendurable. To be always dragging at a chain, and not knowing where it leads to. . . ." Her hand slipped from the gold cross on her breast and fell to the other in her lap, which it clutched tightly. "Four years. . . . I tried to make myself believe that he was gone forever—was dead. It was wicked of me."

My murmur of polite dissent led her to repeat her words.

"Yes, and even worse than that. During the past month I have actually prayed that he might be dead. . . . I shall be punished for it."

I ventured no rejoinder to these words of self-condemnation. Joyce, I reflected, mundanely, had clearly swept her off her feet in the ardour of their first meeting and instant love.

"It must be a great relief to you," I murmured at length, "to have it all definitely settled at last."

"If I could only feel that it was!"

I turned in amazement, to see her leaning a little forward, her hands still tightly clasped in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon the distant horizon where the red spark of Lakalatcha's stertorous breathing flamed and died away. Her breast rose and fell, as if timed to the throbbing of that distant flare.

"I want you to take me to that island—to-morrow."

"Why, surely, Miss Stanleigh," I burst forth, "there can't be any reasonable doubt. Leavitt's mind may be a little flighty—he may have embroidered his story with a few gratuitous details; but Farquharson's books and things—the material evidence of his having lived there——"

"And having died there?"

"Surely Leavitt wouldn't have fabricated that! If you had talked with him——"

"I should not care to talk with Mr. Leavitt," Miss Stanleigh cut me short. "I want only to go and see—if he *is* Mr. Leavitt."

"If he *is* Mr. Leavitt!" For a moment I was mystified, and then in a sudden flash I understood. "But that's preposterous—impossible!"

I tried to conceive of Leavitt in so monstrous a rôle, tried to imagine the missing Farquharson still in the flesh and beguiling Major Stanleigh and myself with so outlandish a story, devising all that ingenious detail to trick us into a belief in his own death. It would indeed have argued a warped mind, guided by some unfathomable purpose.

"I devoutly hope you are right," Miss Stanleigh was saying, with deliberation. "But it is not preposterous, and it is not impossible—if you had known Mr. Farquharson as I have."

It was a discreet confession. She wished me to understand—without the necessity of words. My surmise was that she had met and married Farquharson, whoever he was, under the spell of some momentary infatuation, and that he had proved himself to be an unspeakable brute whom she had speedily abandoned.

"I am determined to go to Muloa, Mr. Barnaby," she announced, with decision. "I want you to make the arrangements, and with as much secrecy as possible. I shall ask my aunt to go with me."

I assured Miss Stanleigh that the *Sylph* was at her service.

Mrs. Stanleigh was a large bland woman, inclined to stoutness and to making confidences, with an intense dislike of the tropics and physical discomforts of any sort. How her niece prevailed upon her to make that surreptitious trip to Muloa, which we set out upon two days later, I have never been

able to imagine. The accommodations aboard the schooner were cramped, to say the least, and the good lady had a perfect horror of volcanoes. The fact that Lakalatcha had behind it a record of a century or more of good conduct did not weigh with her in the least. She was convinced that it would blow its head off the moment the *Sylph* got within range. She was fidgety, talkative, and continually concerned over the state of her complexion, inspecting it in the mirror of her bag at frequent intervals and using a powder-puff liberally to mitigate the pernicious effects of the tropic sun. But once having been induced to make the voyage, I must admit she stuck manfully by her decision, ensconcing herself on deck with books and cushions and numerous other necessities to her comfort, and making the best of the sleeping quarters below. As the captain of the *Sylph*, she wanted me to understand that she had intrusted her soul to my charge, declaring that she would not draw an easy breath until we were safe again in Port Charlotte.

"This dreadful business of Eleanor's," was the way she referred to our mission, and she got round quite naturally to telling me of Farquharson while acquainting me with her fears about volcanoes. Some years before, Pompeii and Herculaneum had had a most unsettling effect upon her nerves. Vesuvius was slightly in eruption at the time. She confessed to never having had an easy moment while in Naples. And it was in Naples that her niece and Farquharson had met. It had been, as I surmised, a swift, romantic courtship, in which Farquharson, quite irreproachable in antecedents and manners, had played the part of an impetuous lover. Italian skies had done the rest. There was an immediate marriage, in spite of Mrs. Stanleigh's protests, and the young couple were off on a honeymoon trip by themselves. But when Mrs. Stanleigh rejoined her husband at Nice, and together they returned to their home in Sussex, a surprise was in store for them. Eleanor was already there—alone, crushed, and with lips absolutely sealed. She had divested herself of everything that linked her to Farquharson; she refused to adopt her married name.

"I shall bless every saint in heaven when we have quite done with this dreadful business of Eleanor's," Mrs. Stanleigh confided to me from her deck-chair. "This trip that she

insists on making herself seems quite uncalled for. But you needn't think, Captain Barnaby, that I'm going to set foot on that dreadful island—not even for the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Farquharson's grave—and I'm shameless enough to say that it *would* be a satisfaction. If you could imagine the tenth part of what I have had to put up with, all these months we've been traveling about trying to locate the wretch! No, indeed—I shall stay right here on this boat and intrust Eleanor to your care while ashore. And I should not think it ought to take long, now should it?"

I confessed aloud that I did not see how it could. If by any chance the girl's secret conjecture about Leavitt's identity was right, it would be verified in the mere act of coming face to face with him, and in that event it would be just as well to spare the unsuspecting aunt the shock of that discovery.

We reached Muloa just before nightfall, letting go the anchor in placid water under the lee of the shore while the *Sylph* swung to and the sails fluttered and fell. A vast hush lay over the world. From the shore the dark green of the forest confronted us with no sound or sign of life. Above, and at this close distance blotting out half the sky over our heads, towered the huge cone of Lakalatcha with scarred and blackened flanks. It was in one of its querulous moods. The feathery white plume of steam, woven by the wind into soft, fantastic shapes, no longer capped the crater; its place had been usurped by thick, dark fumes of smoke swirling sullenly about. In the fading light I marked the red, malignant glow of a fissure newly broken out in the side of the ragged cone, from which came a thin, white trickle of lava.

There was no sign of Leavitt, although the *Sylph* must have been visible to him for several hours, obviously making for the island. I fancied that he must have been unusually absorbed in the vagaries of his beloved volcano. Otherwise he would have wondered what was bringing us back again and his tall figure in shabby white drill would have greeted us from the shore. Instead, there confronted us only the belt of dark, matted green girdling the huge bulk of Lakalatcha which soared skyward, sinister, mysterious, eternal.

In the brief twilight the shore vanished into dim obscurity. Miss Stanleigh, who for the last hour had been standing by

the rail, silently watching the island, at last spoke to me over her shoulder:

"Is it far inland—the place? Will it be difficult to find in the dark?"

Her question staggered me, for she was clearly bent on seeking out Leavitt at once. A strange calmness overlay her. She paid no heed to Lakalatcha's gigantic, smoke-belching cone, but, with fingers gripping the rail, scanned the forbidding and inscrutable forest, behind which lay the answer to her torturing doubt.

I acceded to her wish without protest. Leavitt's bungalow lay a quarter of a mile distant. There would be no difficulty in following the path. I would have a boat put over at once, I announced in a casual way which belied my real feelings, for I was beginning to share some of her own secret tension at this night invasion of Leavitt's haunts.

This feeling deepened within me as we drew near the shore. Leavitt's failure to appear seemed sinister and enigmatic. I began to evolve a fantastic image of him as I recalled his queer ways and his uncanny tricks of speech. It was as if we were seeking out the presiding deity of the island, who had assumed the guise of a Caliban holding unearthly sway over its unnatural processes.

With Williams, the boatswain, carrying a lantern, we pushed into the brush, following the choked trail that led to Leavitt's abode. But the bungalow, when we had reached the clearing and could discern the outlines of the building against the masses of the forest, was dark and deserted. As we mounted the veranda, the loose boards creaked hollowly under our tread; the doorway, from which depended a tattered curtain of coarse burlap, gaped black and empty.

The lantern, lifted high in the boatswain's hand, cleft at a stroke the darkness within. On the writing-table, cluttered with papers and bits of volcanic rock, stood a bottle and half-empty glass. Things lay about in lugubrious disorder, as if the place had been hurriedly ransacked by a thief. Some of the geological specimens had tumbled from the table to the floor, and stray sheets of Leavitt's manuscripts lay under his chair. Leavitt's books, ranged on shelving against the wall, alone seemed undisturbed. Upon the top of the shelving stood two enormous stuffed birds, moldering and decrepit.

regarding the sudden illumination with unblinking, bead-like eyes. Between them a small dancing faun in greenish bronze tripped a Bacchic measure with head thrown back in a transport of derisive laughter.

For a long moment the three of us faced the silent, disordered room, in which the little bronze faun alone seemed alive, convulsed with diabolical mirth at our entrance. Somehow it recalled to me Leavitt's own cynical laugh. Suddenly Miss Stanleigh made toward the photographs above the bookshelves.

"This is he," she said, taking up one of the faded prints.

"Yes—Leavitt," I answered.

"*Leavitt?*" Her fingers tightened upon the photograph. Then, abruptly, it fell to the floor. "Yes, yes—of course." Her eyes closed very slowly, as if an extreme weakness had seized her.

In the shock of that moment I reached out to support her, but she checked my hand. Her gray eyes opened again. A shudder visibly went over her, as if the night air had suddenly become chill. From the shelf the two stuffed birds regarded us dolefully, while the dancing faun, with head thrown back in an attitude of immortal art, laughed derisively.

"Where is he? I must speak to him," said Miss Stanleigh.

"One might think he were deliberately hiding," I muttered, for I was at a loss to account for Leavitt's absence.

"Then find him," the girl commanded. I cut short my speculations to direct Williams to search the hut in the rear of the bungalow, where, behind bamboo palings, Leavitt's Malay servant maintained an aloof and mysterious existence. I sat down beside Miss Stanleigh on the veranda steps to find my hands sooty from the touch of the boards. A fine volcanic ash was evidently drifting in the air, and now to my ear, attuned to the profound stillness, the wind bore a faint humming sound.

"Do you hear that?" I whispered. It was like the far-off murmur of a gigantic caldron, softly a-boil—a dull vibration that seemed to reach us through the ground as well as through the air.

The girl listened a moment, and then started up. "I hear voices—somewhere."

"Voices?" I strained my ears for sounds other than the insistent ferment of the great cone above our heads. "Perhaps Leavitt——"

"Why do you still call him Leavitt?"

"Then you're quite certain——" I began, but an involuntary exclamation from her cut me short.

The light of Williams's lantern, emerging from behind the bamboo palings, disclosed the burly form of the boatswain with a shrinking Malay in tow. He was jabbering in his native tongue, with much gesticulation of his thin arms, and going into contortions at every dozen paces in a sort of pantomime to emphasize his words. Williams urged him along unceremoniously to the steps of the veranda.

"Perhaps you can get the straight of this, Mr. Barnaby," said the boatswain. "He swears that the flame-devil in the volcano has swallowed his master alive."

The poor fellow seemed indeed in a state of complete funk. With his thin legs quaking under him, he poured forth in Malay a crazed, distorted tale. According to Wadakimba, Leavitt—or Farquharson, to give him his real name—had awakened the high displeasure of the flame-devil within the mountain. Had we not observed that the cone was smoking furiously? And the dust and heavy taint of sulphur in the air? Surely we could feel the very tremor of the ground under our feet. All that day the enraged monster had been spouting mud and lava down upon the white *tuan* who had remained in the bungalow, drinking heavily and bawling out maledictions upon his enemy. At length, in spite of Wadakimba's efforts to dissuade him, he had set out to climb to the crater, vowing to show the flame-devil who was master. He had compelled the terrified Wadakimba to go with him a part of the way. The white *tuan*—was he really a god, as he declared himself to be?—had gone alone up the tortuous, fissured slopes, at times lost to sight in yellowish clouds of gas and steam, while his screams and threats of vengeance came back to Wadakimba's ears. Overhead, Lakalatcha continued to rumble and quiver and clear his throat with great showers of mud and stones.

Farquharson must have indeed parted with his reason to have attempted that grotesque sally. Listening to Wadakimba's tale, I pictured the crazed man, scorched to tatters,

heedless of bruises and burns, scrambling up that difficult and perilous ascent, and hurling his ridiculous blasphemy into the flares of smoke and steam that issued from that vast caldron lit by subterranean fires. At its simmering the whole island trembled. A mere whiff of the monster's breath and he would have been snuffed out, annihilated in an instant. According to Wadakimba, the end had indeed come in that fashion. It was as if the mountain had suddenly given a deep sigh. The blast had carried away solid rock. A sheet of flame had licked the spot where Farquharson had been hurled headlong, and he was not.

Wadakimba, viewing all this from afar, had scuttled off to his hut. Later he had ventured back to the scene of the tragedy. He had picked up Farquharson's scorched helmet, which had been blown off to some distance, and he also exhibited a pair of binoculars washed down by the tide of lava, scarred and twisted by the heat, from which the lenses had melted away.

I translated for Miss Stanleigh briefly, while she stood turning over in her hands the twisted and blackened binoculars, which were still warm. She heard me through without question or comment, and when I proposed that we get back to the *Sylph* at once, mindful of her aunt's distressed nerves, she assented with a nod. She seemed to have lost the power of speech. In a daze she followed as I led the way back through the forest.

Major Stanleigh and his wife deferred their departure for England until their niece should be properly married to Joyce. At Eleanor's wish, it was a very simple affair, and as Joyce's bride she was as eager to be off to his rubber-plantation in Malduna as he was to set her up there as mistress of his household. I had agreed to give them passage on the *Sylph*, since the next sailing of the mail-boat would have necessitated a further fortnight's delay.

Mrs. Stanleigh, with visions of seeing England again, and profoundly grateful to a benevolent Providence that had not only brought "this dreadful business of Eleanor's" to a happy termination, but had averted Lakalatcha's baptism of fire from descending upon her own head, thanked me profusely and a little tearfully. It was during the general chorus of

farewells at the last moment before the *Sylph* cast off. Her last appeal, cried after us from the wharf where she stood frantically waving a wet handkerchief, was that I should give Muloa a wide berth.

It brought a laugh from Joyce. He had discovered the good lady's extreme perturbation in regard to Lakalatcha, and had promptly declared for spending a day there with his bride. It was an exceptional opportunity to witness the volcano in its active mood. Each time that Joyce had essayed this teasing pleasantry, which never failed to draw Mrs. Stanleigh's protests, I observed that his wife remained silent. I assumed that she had decided to keep her own counsel in regard to the trip she had made there.

"I'm trusting you not to take Eleanor near that dreadful island, Mr. Barnaby," was the admonition shouted across the widening gap of water.

It was a quite unnecessary appeal, for Joyce, who was presently sitting with his wife in a sheltered quarter of the deck, had not the slightest interest in the smoking cone which was as yet a mere smudge upon the horizon. Eleanor, with one hand in Joyce's possession, at times watched it with a seemingly vast apathy until some ardent word from Joyce would draw her eyes back to his and she would lift to him a smile that was like a caress. The look of weariness and balked purpose that had once marked her expression had vanished. In the week since she had married Joyce she seemed to have grown younger and to be again standing on the very threshold of life with girlish eagerness. She hung on Joyce's every word, communing with him hour after hour, utterly content, indifferent to all the world about her.

In the cabin that evening at dinner, when the two of them deigned to take polite cognizance of my existence, I announced to Joyce that I proposed to hug the island pretty close during the night. It would save considerable time.

"Just as you like, Captain," Joyce replied, indifferently.

"We may get a shower of ashes by doing so, if the wind should shift." I looked across the table at Mrs. Joyce.

"But we shall reach Malduna that much sooner?" she queried.

I nodded. "However, if you feel any uneasiness, I'll give the island a wide berth." I didn't like the idea of dragging

her—the bride of a week—past that place with its unspeakable memories, if it should really distress her.

Her eyes thanked me silently across the table. "It's very kind of you, but"—she chose her words with significant deliberation—"I haven't a fear in the world, Mr. Barnaby."

Evening had fallen when we came up on deck. Joyce be-thought himself of some cigars in his stateroom and went back. For the moment I was alone with his wife by the rail, watching the stars beginning to prick through the darkening sky. The *Sylph* was running smoothly, with the wind almost aft; the scud of water past her bows and the occasional creak of a block aloft were the only sounds audible in the silence that lay like a benediction upon the sea.

"You may think it unfeeling of me," she began, quite abruptly, "but all this past trouble of mine, now that it is ended, I have completely dismissed. Already it begins to seem like a horrid dream. And as for that island"—her eyes looked off toward Muloa now impending upon us and lighting up the heavens with its sullen flare—"it seems incredible that I ever set foot upon it.

"Perhaps you understand," she went on, after a pause, "that I have not told my husband. But I have not deceived him. He knows that I was once married, and that the man is no longer living. He does not wish to know more. Of course he is aware that Uncle Geoffrey came out here to—to see a Mr. Leavitt, a matter which he has no idea concerned me. He thanks the stars for whatever it was that did bring us out here, for otherwise he would not have met me."

"It has turned out most happily," I murmured.

"It was almost disaster. After meeting Mr. Joyce—and I was weak enough to let myself become engaged—to have discovered that I was still chained to a living creature like that. . . . I should have killed myself."

"But surely the courts——"

She shook her head with decision. "My church does not recognize that sort of freedom."

We were drawing steadily nearer to Muloa. The mountain was breathing slowly and heavily—a vast flare that lifted fan-like in the skies and died away. Lightning played fitfully through the dense mass of smoke and choking gases that hung like a pall over the great cone. It was like the night

sky that overhangs a city of gigantic blast-furnaces, only infinitely multiplied. The sails of the *Sylph* caught the ruddy tinge like a phantom craft gliding through the black night, its canvas still dyed with the sunset glow. The faces of the crew, turned to watch the spectacle, curiously fixed and inhuman, were picked out of the gloom by the same fantastic light. It was as if the schooner, with masts and riggings etched black against the lurid sky, sailed on into the Day of Judgment.

It was after midnight. The *Sylph* came about, with sails trembling, and lost headway. Suddenly she vibrated from stem to stern, and with a soft grating sound that was unmistakable came to rest. We were aground in what should have been clear water, with the forest-clad shore of Muloa lying close off to port.

The helmsman turned to me with a look of silly fright on his face, as the wheel revolved useless in his hands. We had shelved with scarcely a jar sufficient to disturb those sleeping below, but in a twinkling Jackson, the mate, appeared on deck in his pajamas, and after a swift glance toward the familiar shore turned to me with the same dumfounded look that had frozen upon the face of the steersman.

"What do you make of this?" he exclaimed, as I called for the lead.

"Be quiet about it," I said to the hands that had started into movement. "Look sharp now, and make no noise." Then I turned to the mate, who was perplexedly rubbing one bare foot against the other and measuring with his eye our distance from the shore. The *Sylph* should have turned the point of the island without mishap, as she had done scores of times.

"It's the volcano we have to thank for this," was my conjecture. "Its recent activity has caused some displacement of the sea bottom."

Jackson's head went back in sudden comprehension. "It's a miracle you didn't plow into it under full sail."

We had indeed come about in the very nick of time to avoid disaster. As matters stood I was hopeful. "With any sort of luck we ought to float clear with the tide."

The mate cocked a doubtful eye at Lakalatcha, uncomfort-

ably close above our heads, flaming at intervals and bathing the deck with an angry glare of light. "If she should begin spitting up a little livelier . . ." he speculated with a shrug, and presently took himself off to his bunk after an inspection below had shown that none of the schooner's seams had started. There was nothing to do but to wait for the tide to make and lift the vessel clear. It would be a matter of three or four hours. I dismissed the helmsman; and the watch forward, taking advantage of the respite from duty, were soon recumbent in attitudes of heavy sleep.

The wind had died out and a heavy torpor lay upon the water. It was as if the stars alone held to their slow courses above a world rigid and inanimate. The *Sylph* lay with a slight list, her spars looking inexpressibly helpless against the sky, and, as the minutes dragged, a fine volcanic ash, like some mortal pestilence exhaled by the monster cone, settled down upon the deck, where, forward in the shadow, the watch lay curled like dead men.

Alone, I paced back and forth—countless soft-footed miles, it seemed, through interminable hours, until at length some obscure impulse prompted me to pause before the open skylight over the cabin and thrust my head down. A lamp above the dining-table, left to burn through the night, feebly illuminated the room. A faint snore issued at regular intervals from the half-open door of the mate's stateroom. The door of Joyce's stateroom opposite was also upon the hook for the sake of air.

Suddenly a soft thump against the side of the schooner, followed by a scrambling noise, made me turn round. The dripping, bedraggled figure of a man in a sleeping-suit mounted the rope ladder that hung over the side, and paused, grasping the rail. I had withdrawn my gaze so suddenly from the glow of the light in the cabin that for several moments the intruder from out of the sea was only a blurred form with one leg hung over the rail, where he hung as if spent by his exertions.

Just then the sooty vapours above the edged maw of the volcano were rent by a flare of crimson, and in the fleeting instant of unnatural daylight I beheld Farquharson, bare-footed, and dripping with sea-water, confronting me with a sardonic, triumphant smile. The light faded in a twinkling,

but in the darkness he swung his other leg over the rail and sat perched there, as if challenging the testimony of my senses.

"Farquharson!" I breathed aloud, utterly dumfounded.

"Did you think I was a ghost?" I could hear him softly laughing to himself in the interval that followed. "You should have witnessed Wadakimba's fright at my coming back from the dead. Well, I'll admit I almost was done for."

Again the volcano breathed in torment. It was like the sudden opening of a gigantic blast-furnace, and in that instant I saw him vividly—his thin, saturnine face, his damp black hair pushed sleekly back, his lips twisted to a cruel smile, his eyes craftily alert, as if to some ambushed danger continually at hand. He was watching me with a sort of malicious relish in the shock he had given me.

"It was not your intention to stop at Muloa," he observed, dryly, for the plight of the schooner was obvious.

"We'll float clear with the tide," I muttered.

"But in the meantime"—there was something almost menacing in his deliberate pause—"I have the pleasure of this little call upon you."

A head lifted from among the inert figures and sleepily regarded us before it dropped back into the shadows. The stranded ship, the recumbent men, the mountain flaming overhead—it was like a phantom world into which had been suddenly thrust this ghastly and incredible reality.

"Whatever possessed you to swim out here in the middle of the night?" I demanded, in a harsh whisper.

He chose to ignore the question, while I waited in a chill of suspense. It was inconceivable that he could be aware of the truth of the situation and deliberately bent on forcing it to its unspeakable, tragic issue.

"Of late, Captain Barnaby, we seem to have taken to visiting each other rather frequently, don't you think?"

It was lightly tossed off, but not without its evil implication; and I felt his eyes intently fixed upon me as he sat hunched up on the rail in his sodden sleeping-suit, like some huge, ill-omened bird of prey.

To get rid of him, to obliterate the horrible fact that he still existed in the flesh, was the instinctive impulse of my staggered brain. But the peril of discovery, the chance that those

sleeping below might waken and hear us, held me in a vise of indecision.

"If I could bring myself to reproach you, Captain," he went on, ironically polite, "I might protest that your last visit to this island savoured of a too-inquisitive intrusion. You'll pardon my frankness. I had convinced you and Major Stanleigh that Farquharson was dead. To the world at large that should have sufficed. That I choose to remain alive is my own affair. Your sudden return to Muloa—with a lady—would have upset everything, if Fate and that inspired fool of a Malay had not happily intervened. But now, surely, there can be no doubt that I am dead?"

I nodded assent in a dumb, helpless way.

"And I have a notion that even you, Captain Barnaby, will never dispute that fact."

He threw back his head suddenly—for all the world like the dancing faun—and laughed silently at the stars.

My tongue was dry in my mouth as I tried to make some rejoinder. He baffled me completely, and meanwhile I was in a tingle of fear lest the mate should come up on deck to see what progress the tide had made, or lest the sound of our voices might waken the girl in Joyce's stateroom.

"I can promise you that," I attempted to assure him in weak, sepulchral tones. "And now, if you like, I'll put you ashore in the small boat. You must be getting chilly in that wet sleeping-suit."

"As a matter of fact I am, and I was wondering if you would not offer me something to drink."

"You shall have a bottle to take along," I promised, with alacrity, but he demurred.

"There is no sociability in that. And you seem very lonesome here—stuck for two more hours at least. Come, Captain, fetch your bottle and we will share it together."

He got down from the rail, stretched his arms lazily above his head, and dropped into one of the deck chairs that had been placed aft for the convenience of my two passengers.

"And cigars, too, Captain," he suggested, with a politeness that was almost impertinence. "We'll have a cozy hour or two out of this tedious wait for the tide to lift you off."

I contemplated him helplessly. There was no alternative but to fall in with whatever mad caprice might seize his brain.

If I opposed him, it would lead to high and querulous words; and the hideous fact of his presence there—of his mere existence—I was bound to conceal at all hazards.

"I must ask you to keep quiet," I said, stiffly.

"As a tomb," he agreed, and his eyes twinkled disagreeably in the darkness. "You forget that I am supposed to be in one."

I went stealthily down into the cabin, where I secured a box of cigars and the first couple of bottles that my hands laid hold of in the locker. They proved to contain an old Tokay wine which I had treasured for several years to no particular purpose. The ancient bottles clinked heavily in my grasp as I mounted again to the deck.

"Now this is something like," he purred, watching like a cat my every motion as I set the glasses forth and guardedly drew the cork. He saluted me with a flourish and drank.

To an onlooker that pantomime in the darkness would have seemed utterly grotesque. I tasted the fragrant, heavy wine and waited—waited in an agony of suspense—my ears strained desperately to catch the least sound from below. But a profound silence enveloped the schooner, broken only by the occasional rhythmic snore of the mate.

"You seem rather ill at ease," Farquharson observed from the depths of the deck chair when he had his cigar comfortably aglow. "I trust it isn't this little impromptu call of mine that's disturbing you. After all, life has its unusual moments, and this, I think, is one of them." He sniffed the bouquet of his wine and drank. "It is rare moments like this—bizarre, incredible, what you like—that compensate for the tedium of years."

His disengaged hand had fallen to the side of the chair, and I now observed in dismay that a scarf belonging to Joyce's wife had been left lying in the chair, and that his fingers were absently twisting the silken fringe.

"I wonder that you stick it out, as you do, on this island," I forced myself to observe, seeking safety in the commonplace, while my eyes, as if fascinated, watched his fingers toying with the ends of the scarf. I was forced to accept the innuendo beneath his enigmatic utterances. His utter baseness and depravity, born perhaps of a diseased mind, I could understand. I had led him to bait a trap with the fiction of his own

death, but he could not know that it had been already sprung upon his unsuspecting victims.

He seemed to regard me with contemptuous pity. "Naturally, you wonder. A mere skipper like yourself fails to understand—many things. What can you know of life cooped up in this schooner? You touch only the surface of things just as this confounded boat of yours skims only the top of the water. Once in a lifetime you may come to real grips with life—strike bottom, eh?—as your schooner has done now. Then you're aground and quite helpless. What a pity!"

He lifted his glass and drank it off, then thrust it out to be refilled. "Life as the world lives it—bah!" he dismissed it with the scorn of one who counts himself divested of all illusions. "Life would be an infernal bore if it were not for its paradoxes. Now you, Captain Barnaby, would never dream that in becoming dead to the world—in other people's belief—I have become intensely alive. There are opened up infinite possibilities——"

He drank again and eyed me darkly, and then went on in his crack-brained way. "What is life but a challenge to pretense, a constant exercise in duplicity, with so few that come to master it as an art? Every one goes about with something locked deep in his heart. Take yourself, Captain Barnaby. You have your secrets—hidden from me, from all the world—which, if they could be dragged out of you——"

His deep-set eyes bored through the darkness upon me. Hunched up in the deck chair, with his legs crossed under him, he was like an animated Buddha venting a dark philosophy and seeking to undermine my mental balance with his sophistry.

"I'm a plain man of the sea," I rejoined, bluntly. "I take life as it comes."

He smiled derisively, drained his glass, and held it out again. "But you have your secrets, rather clumsily guarded, to be sure——"

"What secrets?" I cried out, goaded almost beyond endurance.

He seemed to deprecate the vigour of my retort and lifted a cautioning hand. "Do you want every one on board to hear this conversation?"

At that moment the smoke-wrapped cone of Lakalatcha was cleft by a sheet of flame, and we confronted each other in a sort of blood-red dawn.

"There is no reason why we should quarrel," he went on, after darkness had enveloped us again. "But there are times which call for plain speaking. Major Stanleigh is probably hardly aware of just what he said to me under a little artful questioning. It seems that a lady who—shall we say, whom we both have the honour of knowing?—is in love. Love, mark you. It is always interesting to see that flower bud twice from the same stalk. However, one naturally defers to a lady, especially when one is very much in her way. *Place aux dames*, eh? Exit poor Farquharson! You must admit that his was an altruistic soul. Well, she has her freedom—if only to barter it for a new bondage. Shall we drink to the happy future of that romance?"

He lifted to me his glass with ironical invitation, while I sat aghast and speechless, my heart pounding against my ribs. This intolerable colloquy could not last forever. I deliberated what I should do if we were surprised. At the sound of a footfall or the soft creak of a plank I felt that I might lose all control and leap up and brain him with the heavy bottle in my grasp. I had an insane desire to spring at his throat and throttle his infamous bravado, tumble him overboard and annihilate the last vestige of his existence.

"Come, Captain," he urged, "you, too, have shared in smoothing the path for these lovers. Shall we not drink to their happy union?"

A feeling of utter loathing went over me. I set my glass down. "It would be a more serviceable compliment to the lady in question if I strangled you on the spot," I muttered, boldly.

"But you are forgetting that I am already dead." He threw his head back as if vastly amused, then lurched forward and held out his glass a little unsteadily to be refilled.

He gave me a quick, evil look. "Besides, the noise might disturb your passengers."

I could feel a cold perspiration suddenly breaking out upon my body. Either the fellow had obtained an inkling of the truth in some incredible way, or was blindly on the track of it, guided by some diabolical scent. Under the spell of his eyes,

I could not manage the outright lie which stuck in my throat.

"What makes you think I have passengers?" I parried, weakly.

With intent or not, he was again fingering the fringe of the scarf that hung over the arm of the chair.

"It is not your usual practice, but you have been carrying them lately."

He drained his glass and sat staring into it, his head drooping a little forward. The heavy wine was beginning to have its effect upon him, but whether it would provoke him to some outright violence or drag him down into a stupor, I could not predict. Suddenly the glass slipped from his fingers and shivered to pieces on the deck. I started violently at the sound, and in the silence that followed I thought I heard a footfall in the cabin below.

He looked up at length from his absorbed contemplation of the bits of broken glass. "We were talking about love, were we not?" he demanded, heavily.

I did not answer. I was straining to catch a repetition of the sound from below. Time was slipping rapidly away, and to sit on meant inevitable discovery. The watch might waken or the mate appear to surprise me in converse with my nocturnal visitor. It would be folly to attempt to conceal his presence and I despaired of getting him back to shore while his present mood held, although I remembered that the small boat, which had been lowered after we went aground, was still moored to the rail amidships.

Refilling my own glass, I offered it to him. He lurched forward to take it, but the fumes of the wine suddenly drifted clear of his brain. "You seem very much distressed," he observed, with ironic concern. "One might think you were actually sheltering these precious love-birds."

Perspiration broke out anew upon my face and neck. "I don't know what you are talking about," I bluntly tried to fend off his implication. I felt as if I were helplessly strapped down and that he was about to probe me mercilessly with some sharp instrument. I strode to turn the direction of his thoughts by saying, "I understand that the Stanleighs are returning to England."

"The Stanleighs—quite so," he nodded agreement, and fixed me with a maudlin stare. Something prompted me to

fill his glass again. He drank it off mechanically. Again I poured, and he obediently drank. With an effort he tried to pick up the thread of our conversation:

"What did you say? Oh, the Stanleighs . . . yes, yes, of course." He slowly nodded his head and fell silent. "I was about to say . . ." He broke off again and seemed to ruminate profoundly. . . . "Love-birds——" I caught the word feebly from his lips, spoken as if in a daze. The glass hung dripping in his relaxed grasp.

It was a crucial moment in which his purpose seemed to waver and die in his clouded brain. A great hope sprang up in my heart, which was hammering furiously. If I could divert his fuddled thoughts and get him back to shore while the wine lulled him to forgetfulness.

I leaned forward to take the glass which was all but slipping from his hand, when Lakalatcha flamed with redoubled fury. It was as if the mountain had suddenly bared its fiery heart to the heavens, and a muffled detonation reached my ears.

Farquharson straightened up with a jerk and scanned the smoking peak, from which a new trickle of white-hot lava had broken forth in a threadlike waterfall. He watched its graceful play as if hypnotized, and began babbling to himself in an incoherent prattle. All his faculties seemed suddenly awake, but riveted solely upon the heavy labouring of the mountain. He was chiding it in Malay as if it were a fractious child. When I ventured to urge him back to shore he made no protest, but followed me into the boat. As I pushed off and took up the oars he had eyes for nothing but the flaming cone, as if its leaping fires held for him an Apocalyptic vision.

I strained at the oars as if in a race, with all eternity at stake, blindly urging the boat ahead through water that flashed crimson at every stroke. The mountain now flamed like a beacon, and I rowed for dear life over a sea of blood.

Farquharson sat entranced before the spectacle, chanting to himself a kind of insane ritual, like a Parsee fire-worshipper making obeisance before his god. He was rapt away to some plane of mystic exaltation, to some hinterland of the soul that merged upon madness. When at length the boat crunched upon the sandy shore he got up unsteadily from the stern and pointed to the pharos that flamed in the heavens.

"The fire upon the altar is lit," he addressed me, oracularly, while the fanatic light of a devotee burned in his eyes. "Shall we ascend and prepare the sacrifice?"

I leaned over the oars, panting from my exertions, indifferent to his rhapsody.

"If you'll take my advice, you'll get back at once to your bungalow and strip off that wet sleeping-suit," I bluntly counseled him, but I might as well have argued with a man in a trance.

He leaped over the gunwale and strode up the beach. Again he struck his priest-like attitude and invoked me to follow.

"The fire upon the altar waits," he repeated, solemnly. Suddenly he broke into a shrill laugh and ran like a deer in the direction of the forest that stretched up the slopes of the mountain.

The mate's face, thrust over the rail as I drew alongside the schooner, plainly bespoke his utter bewilderment. He must have thought me bereft of my senses to be paddling about at that hour of the night. The tide had made, and the *Sylph*, righting her listed masts, was standing clear of the shoal. The deck was astir, and when the command was given to hoist the sails it was obeyed with an uneasy alacrity. The men worked frantically in a bright, unnatural day, for Laka-latcha was now continuously aflame and tossing up red-hot rocks to the accompaniment of dull sounds of explosion.

My first glance about the deck had been one of relief to note that Joyce and his wife were not there, although the commotion of getting under sail must have awakened them. A breeze had sprung up which would prove a fair wind as soon as the *Sylph* stood clear of the point. The mate gave a grunt of satisfaction when at length the schooner began to dip her bow and lay over to the task. Leaving him in charge, I started to go below, when suddenly Mrs. Joyce, fully dressed, confronted me. She seemed to have materialized out of the air like a ghost. Her hair glowed like burnished copper in the unnatural illumination which bathed the deck, but her face was ashen, and the challenge of her eyes made my heart stop short.

"You have been awake long?" I ventured to ask.

"Too long," she answered, significantly, with her face

turned away, looking down into the water. She had taken my arm and drawn me toward the rail. Now I felt her fingers tighten convulsively. In the droop of her head and the tense curve of her neck I sensed her mad impulse which the dark water suggested.

"Mrs. Joyce!" I remonstrated, sharply.

She seemed to go limp all over at the words. I drew her along the deck for a faltering step or two, while her eyes continued to brood upon the water rushing past. Suddenly she spoke:

"What other way out is there?"

"Never that," I said, shortly. I urged her forward again.

"Is your husband asleep?"

"Thank God, yes!"

"Then you have been awake——"

"For over an hour," she confessed, and I detected the shudder that went over her body.

"The man is mad——"

"But I am married to him." She stopped and caught at the rail like a prisoner gripping at the bars that confine him. "I cannot—cannot endure it! Where are you taking me? Where *can* you take me? Don't you see that there is no escape—from this?"

The *Sylph* rose and sank to the first long roll of the open sea.

"When we reach Malduna——" I began, but the words were only torture.

"I cannot—cannot go on. Take me back!—to that island! Let me live abandoned—or rather die——"

"Mrs. Joyce, I beg of you. . . ."

The schooner rose and dipped again.

For what seemed an interminable time we paced the deck together while Lakalatcha flamed farther and farther astern. Her words came in fitful snatches as if spoken in a delirium, and at times she would pause and grip the rail to stare back, wild-eyed, at the receding island.

Suddenly she started, and in a sort of blinding, noon-day blaze I saw her face blanch with horror. It was as if at that moment the heavens had cracked asunder and the night had fallen away in chaos. Turning, I saw the cone of the mountain lifting skyward in fragments—and saw no more, for the blinding vision remained seared upon the retina of my eyes.

Across the water, slower paced, came the dread concussion of sound.

"Good God! It's carried away the whole island!" I heard the mate's voice bellowing above the cries of the men. The *Sylph* scudded before the approaching storm of fire redescending from the sky. . . .

The first gray of the dawn disclosed Mrs. Joyce still standing by the rail, her hand nestling within the arm of her husband, indifferent to the heavy grayish dust that fell in benediction upon her like a silent shower of snow.

The island of Muloa remains to-day a charred cinder lapped about by the blue Pacific. At times gulls circle over its blackened and desolate surface devoid of every vestige of life. From the squat, truncated mass of Lakalatcha, shorn of half its lordly height, a feeble wisp of smoke still issues to the breeze, as if Vulcan, tired of his forge, had banked its fire before abandoning it.

THE ARGOSIES

By ALEXANDER HULL

From Scribner's Magazine

THERE may have been some benevolent force watching over Harber. In any case, that would be a comforting belief. Certainly Harber himself so believed, and I know he had no trouble at all convincing his wife. Yes, the Harbers believed.

But credulity, you may say, was ever the surest part in love's young golden dream: and you, perhaps, not having your eyes befuddled with the rose-fog of romance, will see too clearly to believe. What can I adduce for your conviction? The facts only. After all, that is the single strength of my position.

There was, of course, the strange forehanded, subtle planning of the other girl, of Janet Spencer. Why did she do it? Was it that, feeling her chances in Tawnleytown so few, counting the soil there so barren, driven by an ambition beyond the imagination of staid, stodgy, normal Tawnleytown girls, she felt she must create opportunities where none were? She was very lovely, Harber tells me, in a fiery rose-red of the fairy-tale way; though even without beauty it needn't have been hard for her. Young blood is prone enough to adventure; the merest spark will set it akindle. I should like to have known that girl. She must have been very clever. Because, of course, she couldn't have foreseen, even by the surest instinct, the coincidence that brought Harber and Barton together. Yes, there is a coincidence in it. It's precisely upon that, you see, that Harber hangs his belief.

I wonder, too, how many of those argosies she sent out seeking the golden fleece returned to her? It's a fine point for

speculation. If one only knew. . . . ah, but it's pitiful how much one doesn't, and can't, know in this hard and complex world! Or was it merely that she tired of them and wanted to be rid of them? Or again, do I wrong her there, and were there no more than the two of them, and did she simply suffer a solitary revulsion of feeling, as Harber did? But no, I'm sure I'm right in supposing Barton and Harber to have been but two ventures out of many, two arrows out of a full quiver shot in the dark at the bull's-eye of fortune. And, by heaven, it was splendid shooting . . . even if none of the other arrows scored!

Harber tells me he was ripe for the thing without any encouragement to speak of. Tawnleytown was dull plodding for hot youth. Half hidden in the green of fir and oak and maple, slumberous with midsummer heat, it lay when he left it. Thickly powdered with the fine white dust of its own unpaven streets, dust that sent the inhabitants chronically sneezing and weeping and red-eyed about town, or sent them north to the lakes for exemption, dust that hung impalpably suspended in the still air and turned the sunsets to things of glorious rose and red and gold though there wasn't a single cloud or streamer in the sky to catch the light, dust that lay upon lawns and walks and houses in deep gray accumulation . . . precisely as if these were objects put away and never used and not disturbed until they were white with the inevitable powdery accretion that accompanies disuse. Indeed, he felt that way about Tawnleytown, as if it were a closed room of the world, a room of long ago, unused now, unimportant, forgotten.

So unquestionably he was ready enough to go. He had all the fine and far-flung dreams of surging youth. He peopled the world with his fancies, built castles on every high hill. He felt the urge of ambition fiercely stirring within him, latent power pulsing through him. What would you? Wasn't he young and in love?

For there had been, you must know, a good deal between them. What does one do in these deadly dull little towns for amusement, when one is young and fain and restless? Harber tells me they walked the streets and shaded lanes in the dim green coolness of evening, lounged in the orchard hammock, drifted down the little river, past still pools, reed-bordered,

under vaulting sycamores, over hurrying reaches fretted with pebbles, forgot everything except one another and their fancies and made, as youth must, love. That was the programme complete, except for the talk, the fascinating, never-ending talk. Volumes on volumes of it—whole libraries of it.

So, under her veiled fostering, the feeling that he must leave Tawnleytown kept growing upon Harber until one evening it crystallized in decision.

It was on a Sunday. They had taken a lunch and climbed Bald Knob, a thousand feet above the town, late in the afternoon. The dying sun and the trees had given them a splendid symphony in black and gold, and had silenced them for a little. They sat looking down over the valley in which the well-known landmarks slowly grew dark and indistinguishable and dim lights blossomed one after another. The sound of church bells rose faintly through the still air. The pale last light faded in the sky.

Harber and Janet sat in the long grass, their hearts stirring with the same urgent, inarticulate thoughts, their hands clasped together.

"Let's wait for Eighty-seven," she said.

Harber pressed her hand for reply.

In the mind of each of them Eighty-seven was the symbol of release from Tawnleytown, of freedom, of romance.

Presently a shifting light appeared in the east, a faint rumble became perceptible and increased. The swaying shaft of light intensified and a moment later the long-drawn poignancy of a chime-whistle blowing for the river-road crossing, exquisitely softened by distance, echoing penetrated the still valley.

A streak of thunderous light swam into view and passed them, plunging into a gap in the west. The fire-box in the locomotive opened and flung a flood of light upon a swirling cloud of smoke. A sharp turn in the track, a weak blast of the whistle at the bridge-head, and the "Limited," disdaining contemptible Tawnleytown, had swept out of sight—into the world—at a mile to the minute.

"If I were on it," said Harber slowly.

Janet caught her breath sharply. "You're a man!" she said fiercely. "You could be—so easily!"

Harber was startled for a moment. Her kindling of his

flame of adventure had been very subtle until now. Perhaps she hadn't been sure before to-day of her standing. But this afternoon, upon the still isolation of Bald Knob, there had been many kisses exchanged, and brave vows of undying love. And no doubt she felt certain of him now.

With Harber, however, the pathway had seemed leading elsewhere. He wasn't the sort of youth to kiss and ride away. And, discounting their adventurous talk, he had tacitly supposed that his course the last few weeks spelled the confinement of the four walls of a Tawnleytown cottage, the fetters of an early marriage. He had been fighting his mounting fever for the great world, and thinking, as the train sped by, that after all "home was best." It would be. It must be. So, if his fine dreams were the price he must pay for Janet, still he would pay them! And he was startled by her tone.

Her slim fingers tightened upon his.

"Why do you stay?" she cried passionately. "Why don't you go?"

"There's you," he began.

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I'm selfish, maybe! I don't know! But it's as much for me as for you that I say it!"

Her words poured out tumultuously.

"Where are all our wonderful dreams—if you stay here? Gone aglimmering! Gone! I can't see them all go—I can't! Can you?"

Was he to have, then, both Janet and his dreams? His heart quickened. He leaned impulsively toward her.

She pushed his face away with her free hand.

"No—no! Wait till I'm through! We've always known we weren't like other Tawnleytown folk, haven't we, dear? We've always said that we wanted more out of life than they—that we wouldn't be content with half a loaf—that we wanted the bravest adventures, the yellowest gold, the finest emotions, the greater power! And if now . . .

"See those lights down there—so few—and so faint. We can't live our lives there. Seventy-five dollars a month in the bank for you—and dull, deadly monotony for both of us—no dreams—no adventures—nothing big and fine! We can't be content with that! Why don't you go, John?

"Don't mind me—don't let me keep you—for as soon as

you've won, you can come back to me—and then—we'll see the world together!"

"Janet—Janet!" said Harber, with pounding heart. "How do you know—that I'll win?"

"Ah," she said strangely, "I know! You can't fail—I *won't let you fail!*"

Harber caught her suddenly in his arms and kissed her as if it were to be his last token of her.

"I'm going then!" he whispered. "I'm going!"

"When?"

"There's no time to be lost!" he said, thinking fast. "If I had known that you were willing, that you would wait—if . . . Janet, I'm going to-morrow!"

Her arms tightened about him convulsively. "Promise me—promise me!" she demanded tensely, "that you'll never, never forget me—that you'll come back to me!"

Harber laughed in her face. "Janet," he said solemnly, "I'll never forget you. I'll come back to you. I'll come back—'though 'twere ten thousand mile!"

And they walked home slowly, wrapt once more in their fascinating talk, fanning the flames of one another's desires, painting for their future the rich landscapes of paradise. Youth! Brave, hot youth!

The next day Harber contemptuously threw over his job in the bank and fared forth into the wide world that was calling.

Well, he went south, then east, then west, and west, and farther west. So far that presently, after three years, he found himself not west at all, but east—far east. There were between him and Janet Spencer now thousands on thousands of miles of vast heaving seas, and snow-capped mountain ranges, and limitless grassy plains.

Three years of drifting! You'd say, perhaps, knowing the frailty of vows, that the connection might have been lost. But it hadn't. Harber was but twenty-three. Faithfulness, too, comes easier then than later in life, when one has seen more of the world, when the fine patina of illusion has worn off. Besides, there was, I'm sure, a touch of genius about that girl, so that one wouldn't forget her easily, certainly not in three years. And then, you know, Harber had had her letters. Not many of them. Perhaps a dozen to the year.

Pitifully few, but they were filled with a wonderful fascination against which the realities of his wandering life had been powerless to contend. Like a slender cable they bound him—they held him!

Well, he was in Sydney now, standing on the water-front, beneath a bright-blue Australian sky, watching the crinkling water in the Circular Quay as it lifted and fell mightily but easily, and seeing the black ships . . . ah, the ships! Those masterful, much more than human, entities that slipped about the great world nosing out, up dark-green tropical rivers in black, fir-bound fjords, through the white ice-flows of the Arctics, all its romance, all its gold! Three years hadn't dulled the keen edge of his appetite for all that; rather had whetted it.

Nevertheless, as he stood there, he was thinking to himself that he must have done with wandering; the old saw that a rolling stone gathered no moss was cropping up sharply, warningly, in his mind. He had in the three years, however—and this is rather remarkable—accumulated about three thousand dollars. Three thousand dollars! Why, in this quarter of the world, three thousand dollars should be like three thousand of the scriptural mustard-seed—they should grow a veritable forest!

What was puzzling him, however, was where to plant the seed. He was to meet here a man who had a plan for planting in the islands. There were wild rumours afloat of the fortunes that could be made in rubber and vanilla out in the Papuan "Back Beyond." Harber was only half inclined to believe them, perhaps; but half persuaded is well along the way.

He heard his name called, and, turning, he saw a man coming toward him with the rolling gait of the seaman. As he came closer, Harber observed the tawny beard, the sea-blue eyes surrounded by the fine wrinkles of humour, the neat black clothing, the polished boots, and, above all, the gold earrings that marked the man in his mind as Farrington, the sea-captain who had been anxious to meet him.

Harber answered the captain's gleam of teeth with one of his own, and they turned their backs upon the water and went to Harber's room, where they could have their fill of talk undisturbed. Harber says they talked all that afternoon and evening, and well into the next morning, enthusiastically

finding one another the veritable salt of the earth, honourable, level-headed, congenial, temperamentally fitted for exactly what they had in mind—partnership.

“How much can you put in?” asked Harber finally.

“Five hundred pounds,” said the captain.

“I can match you,” said Harber.

“Man, but that’s fine!” cried the captain. “I’ve been looking for you—you, you know—*just you*—for the last two years! And when Pierson told me about you . . . why, it’s luck, I say!”

It was luck for Harber, too. Farrington, you see, knew precisely where he wanted to go, and he had his schooner, and he knew that part of the world, as we say, like a man knows his own buttons. Harber, then, was to manage the plantation; they were going to set out rubber, both Para and native, and try hemp and maybe coffee while they waited for the *Hævia* and the *Ficus* to yield. And Farrington was ready to put the earnings from his schooner against Harber’s wage as manager. The arrangement, you see, was ideal.

Skip seven years with me, please. Consider the plantation affair launched, carried, and consummated. Farrington and Harber have sold the rubber-trees as they neared bearing, and have sold them well. They’re out of that now. In all likelihood, Harber thinks, permanently. For that seven years’ has seen other projects blossom. Harber, says Farrington, has “the golden touch.” There has been trading in the islands, and a short and fortunate little campaign on the stock-market through Sydney brokers, and there has been, more profitable than anything else, the salvaging of the Brent Interisland Company’s steamer *Pailula* by Farrington’s schooner, in which Harber had purchased a half-interest; so the partners are, on the whole, rather well fixed. Harber might be rated at, perhaps, some forty thousand pounds, not counting his interest in the schooner.

One of Janet Spencer’s argosies, then, its cargo laden, is ready to set sail for the hills of home. In short, Harber is now in one of the island ports of call, waiting for the steamer from Fiji. In six weeks he will be in Tawnleytown if all goes well.

It isn’t, and yet it is, the same Harber. He’s thirty now, lean and bronzed and very fit. He can turn a hundred tricks

now where then he could turn one. The tropics have agreed with him. There seems to have been some subtle affinity between them, and he almost wishes that he weren't leaving them. He certainly wouldn't be, if it were not for Janet.

Yes, that slender thread has held him. Through ten years it has kept him faithful. He has eyed askance, ignored, even rebuffed, women. The letters, that still come, have turned the trick, perhaps, or some clinging to a faith that is inherent in him. Or sheer obstinacy? Forgive the cynicism. A little of each, no doubt. And then he hadn't often seen the right sort of women. I say that deliberately, because:

The night before the steamer was due there was a ball—yes, poor island exiles, they called it that!—and Harber, one of some thirty "Europeans" there, went to it, and on the very eve of safety . . .

The glare and the oily smell of the lanterns, the odour of jasmine, frangipanni, vanilla, and human beings sickeningly mingled in the heat, the jangling, out-of-tune music, the wearisome island gossip and chatter, drove him at length out into the night, down a black-shadowed pathway to the sea. The beach lay before him presently, gleaming like silver in the soft blue radiance of the jewelled night. As he stood there, lost in far memories, the mellow, lemon-coloured lights from the commissioner's residence shone beautifully from the fronded palms and the faint wave of the waltzes of yesteryear became poignant and lovely, and the light trade-wind, clean here from the reek of lamps and clothing and human beings, vaguely tangled with the sea, blew upon him with a light, insistent pressure. Half dreaming, he heard the sharp sputter of a launch—bearing belated comers to the ball, no doubt—but he paid no attention to it. He may have been on the beach an hour before he turned to ascend to the town.

And just at the top of the slope he came upon a girl.

She hadn't perceived him, and she stood there, slim and graceful, the moonlight bright upon her rapt face, with her arms outstretched and her head flung back, in an attitude of utter abandonment. Harber felt his heart stir swiftly. He knew what she was feeling, as she looked out over the shimmering half-moon of harbour, across the moaning white feather of reef, out to the illimitable sea, and drank in the

essence of the beauty of the night. Just so, at first, had it clutched him with the pain of ecstasy, and he had never forgotten it. There would be no voicing that feeling; it must ever remain inarticulate. Nor was the girl trying to voice it. Her exquisite pantomime alone spelled her delight in it and her surrender to it.

He saw at a glance that he didn't know her. She was "new" to the islands. Her clothes were evidence enough for that. There was a certain verve to them that spoke of a more sophisticated land. She might have been twenty-five though she seemed younger. She was in filmy white from slipper to throat, and over her slender shoulders there drifted a gossamer banner of scarf, fluttering in the soft trade-wind. Harber was very close to see this, and still she hadn't observed him.

"Don't let me startle you, please!" he said, as he stepped from the shadow of the trumpet-flower bush that had hitherto concealed him.

Her arms came down slowly, her chin lowered; her pose, if you will, melted away. Her voice when she spoke was low and round and thrilled, and it sent an answering thrill through Harber.

"I'm mad!" she said. "Moon-mad—or tropic-mad. I didn't hear you. I was worshipping the night!"

"As I have been," said Harber, feeling a sudden pagan kinship with her mood.

She smiled, and her smile seemed the most precious thing in the world. "You, too? But it isn't new to you . . . and when the newness is gone every one—here at least—seems dead to it!"

"Sometimes I think it's always new," replied Harber. "And yet I've had years of it . . . but how did you know?"

"You're Mr. Harber, aren't you?"

"Yes. But——"

"Only that I knew you were here, having heard of you from the Tretheways, and I'd accounted for every one else. I couldn't stay inside because it seemed to me that it was wicked when I had come so far for just this, to be inside stuffily dancing. One can dance all the rest of one's life in Michigan, you know! So——"

"It's the better place to be—out here," said Harber abruptly. "Need we go in?"

"I don't know," she said doubtfully. "Maybe you can tell me. You see, I've promised some dances. What's the usage here? Dare I run away from them?"

"Oh, it might prove a three-day scandal if you did," said Harber. "But I know a bench off to the right, where it isn't likely you'll be found by any questing partner, and you needn't confess to having had a companion. Will you come and talk to me?"

"I'm a bird of passage," she answered, smiling, "and I've only to unfold my wings and fly away from the smoke of scandal. Yes, I'll come—if you won't talk—too much. You see, after all, I won't flatter you. It's the night I want, not talk . . . the wonderful night!"

But, of course, they did talk. She was an American girl, she told him, and had studied art a little, but would never be much of a painter. She had been teaching classes in a city high school in the Middle West, when suddenly life there seemed to have gone humdrum and stale. She had a little money saved, not much, but enough if she managed well, and she'd boldly resigned and determined, once at least before she was too old, to follow spring around the world. She had almost given up the idea of painting now, but thought presently she might go in for writing, where, after all, perhaps, her real talent lay. She had gotten a letter of introduction in Suva to the Tretheways and she would be here until the next steamer after the morrow's.

These were the bare facts. Harber gave a good many more than he got, he told me, upon the theory that nothing so provoked confidence as giving it. He was a little mad himself that night, he admits, or else very, very sane. As you will about that. But, from the moment she began to talk, the thought started running through his head that there was fate in this meeting.

There was a sort of passionate fineness about her that caught and answered some instinct in Harber . . . and I'm afraid they talked more warmly than the length of their acquaintance justified, that they made one another half-promises, not definite, perhaps, but implied; promises that. . . .

"I *must* go in," she said at last, reluctantly.

He knew that she must, and he made no attempt to gainsay her.

"You are going to America," she went on. "If you should——"

And just at that moment, Harber says, anything seemed possible to him, and he said eagerly: "Yes—if you will—I should like——"

How well they understood one another is evident from that. Neither had said it definitely, but each knew.

"Have you a piece of paper?" she asked.

Harber produced a pencil, and groped for something to write upon. All that his pockets yielded was a sealed envelope. He gave it to her.

She looked at it closely, and saw in the brilliant moonshine that it was sealed and stamped and addressed.

"I'll spoil it for mailing," she said.

"It doesn't matter," Harber told her ineptly. "Or you can write it lightly, and I'll erase it later."

There was a little silence. Then suddenly she laughed softly, and there was a tiny catch in the voice. "So that you can forget?" she said bravely. "No! I'll write it fast and hard . . . so that you can . . . never . . . forget!"

And she gave him first his pencil and envelope, and afterward her hand, which Harber held for a moment that seemed like an eternity and then let go. She went into the house, but Harber didn't follow her. He went off to his so-called hotel.

In his room, by the light of the kerosene-lamp, he took out the envelope and read what she had written. It was:

Vanessa Simola, Claridon, Michigan.

He turned over the envelope and looked at the address on the other side, in his own handwriting:

Miss Janet Spencer, Tawnleytown. . . .

And the envelope dropped from his nerveless fingers to the table.

Who shall say how love goes or comes? Its ways are a sacred, insoluble mystery, no less. But it had gone for Harber: and just as surely, though so suddenly, had it come! Yes, life had bitterly tricked him at last. She had sent him

this girl . . . too late! The letter in the envelope was written to tell Janet Spencer that within six weeks he would be in Tawnleytown to claim her in marriage.

One must be single-minded like Harber to appreciate his terrible distress of mind. The facile infidelity of your ordinary mortal wasn't for Harber. No, he had sterner stuff in him.

Vanessa! The name seemed so beautiful . . . like the girl herself, like the things she had said. It was an Italian name. She had told him her people had come from Venice, though she was herself thoroughly a product of America. "So that you can never forget," she had said. Ah, it was the warm blood of Italy in her veins that had prompted that! An American girl wouldn't have said that!

He slit the envelope, letting the letter fall to the table, and put it in his pocket.

Yet why should he save it? He could never see her again, he knew. Vain had been those half-promises, those wholly lies, that his eyes and lips had given her. For there was Janet, with her prior promises. Ten years Janet had waited for him . . . ten years . . . and suddenly, aghast, he realized how long and how terrible the years are, how they can efface memories and hopes and desires, and how cruelly they had dealt with him, though he had not realized it until this moment. Janet . . . why, actually, Janet was a stranger, he didn't know Janet any more! She was nothing but a frail phantom of recollection: the years had erased her! But this girl—warm, alluring, immediate. . . .

No—no! It couldn't be.

So much will the force of an idea do for a man, you see. Because, of course, it could have been. He had only to destroy the letter that lay there before him, to wait on until the next sailing, to make continued love to Vanessa, and never to go to Tawnleytown again. There was little probability that Janet would come here for him. Ten years and ten thousand miles . . . despite all that he had vowed on Bald Knob that Sunday so long ago, wouldn't you have said that was barrier enough?

Why, so should I! But it wasn't.

For Harber took the letter and put it in a fresh envelope, and in the morning he went aboard the steamer without seeing the girl again . . . unless that bit of white standing near

the top of the slope, as the ship churned the green harbour water heading out to sea, were she, waving.

But he kept the address she had written.

Why? He never could use it. Well, perhaps he didn't want to forget too soon, though it hurt him to remember. How many of us, after all, have some little memory like that, some intimate communion with romance, which we don't tell, but cling to? And perhaps the memory is better than the reality would have been. We imagine . . . but that again is cynical. Harber will never be that now. Let me tell you why.

It's because he hadn't been aboard ship on his crossing to Victoria twenty-four hours before he met Clay Barton.

Barton was rolled up in rugs, lying in a deck-chair, biting his teeth hard together to keep them from chattering, though the temperature was in the eighties, and most of the passengers in white. Barton appeared to be a man of forty, whereas he turned out to be in his early twenties. He was emaciated to an alarming degree and his complexion was of the pale, yellow-green that spoke of many recurrences of malaria. The signs were familiar to Harber.

He sat down beside Barton, and, as the other looked at him half a dozen times tentatively, he presently spoke to him.

"You've had a bad time of it, haven't you?"

"Terrible," said Barton frankly. "They say I'm convalescent now. I don't know. Look at me. What would you say?"

Harber shook his head.

Barton laughed bitterly. "Yes, I'm pretty bad," he agreed readily. And then, as he talked that day and the two following, he told Harber a good many things.

"I tell you, Harber," he said, "we'll do anything for money. Here I am—and I knew damned well it was killing me, too. And yet I stuck it out six months after I'd any earthly business to—just for a few extra hundreds."

"Where were you? What were you doing?" asked Harber.

"Trading-post up a river in the Straits Settlements," said Barton. "A crazy business from the beginning—and yet I made money. Made it lots faster than I could have back home. Back there you're hedged about with too many rules. And competition's too keen. You go into some big corpora-

tion office at seventy-five a month, maybe, and unless you have luck you're years getting near anything worth having. And you've got to play politics, bootlick your boss—all that. So I got out.

"Went to California first, and got a place in an exporting firm in San Francisco. They sent me to Sydney and then to Fiji. After I'd been out for a while and got the hang of things, I cut loose from them.

"Then I got this last chance, and it looked mighty good—and I expect I've done for myself by it. Five years or a little better. That's how long I've lasted. Back home I'd have been good for thirty-five. A short life and a merry one, they say. Merry. Good God!"

He shook his head ironically.

"The root of all evil," he resumed after a little. "Well, but you've got to have it—can't get along without it in *this* world. You've done well, you say?"

Harber nodded.

"Well, so should I have, if the cursed fever had let me alone. In another year or so I'd have been raking in the coin. And now here I am—busted—done—*fini*, as the French say. I burned the candle at both ends—and got just what was coming to me, I suppose. But how *could* I let go, just when everything was coming my way?"

"I know," said Harber. "But unless you can use it——"

"You're right there. Not much in it for me now. Still, the medicos say a cold winter back home will . . . I don't know. Sometimes I don't think I'll last to . . .

"Where's the use, you ask, Harber? You ask me right now, and I can't tell you. But if you'd asked me before I got like this, I could have told you quick enough. With some men, I suppose, it's just an acquisitive nature. With me, that didn't cut any figure. With me, it was a girl. I wanted to make the most I could for her in the shortest time. A girl . . . well . . ."

Harber nodded. "I understand. I came out for precisely the same reason myself," he remarked.

"You did?" said Barton, looking at him sadly. "Well, luck was with you, then. You look so—so damned fit! You can go back to her . . . while I . . . ain't it hell? Ain't it?" he demanded fiercely.

"Yes," admitted Harber, "it is. But at the same time, I'm not sure that anything's ever really lost. If she's worth while——"

Barton made a vehement sign of affirmation.

"Why, she'll be terribly sorry for you, but she won't *care*," concluded Harber. "I mean, she'll be waiting for you, and glad to have you coming home, so glad that . . ."

"Ah . . . yes. That's what . . . I haven't mentioned the fever in writing to her, you see. It will be a shock."

Harber, looking at him, thought that it would, indeed.

"I had a letter from her just before we sailed," went on the other, more cheerfully. "I'd like awfully, some time, to have you meet her. She's a wonderful girl—wonderful. She's clever. She's much cleverer than I am, really . . . about most things. When we get to Victoria, you must let me give you my address."

"Thanks," said Harber. "I'll be glad to have it."

That was the last Harber saw of him for five days. The weather had turned rough, and he supposed the poor fellow was seasick, and thought of him sympathetically, but let it rest there. Then, one evening after dinner, the steward came for him and said that Mr. Clay Barton wanted to see him. Harber followed to Barton's stateroom, which the sick man was occupying alone. In the passageway near the door, he met the ship's doctor.

"Mr. Harber?" said the doctor. "Your friend in there—I'm sorry to say—is——"

"I suspected as much," said Harber. "He knows it himself, I think."

"Does he?" said the doctor, obviously relieved. "Well, I hope that he'll live till we get him ashore. There's just a chance, of course, though his fever is very high now. He's quite lucid just now, and has been insisting upon seeing you. Later he mayn't be conscious. So——"

Harber nodded. "I'll go in."

Barton lay in his berth, still, terribly thin, and there were two pink patches of fever burning upon his cheek-bones. He opened his eyes with an infinite weariness as Harber entered the room, and achieved a smile.

"Hard luck, old fellow," said Harber, crossing to him.

"'S all *up*!" said Barton, grinning gamely. "I'm through. Asked 'em to send you in. Do something for me, Harber—tha's right, ain't it—Harber's your name?"

"Yes. What is it, Barton?"

Barton closed his eyes, then opened them again.

"Doggone memory—playin' tricks," he apologized faintly. "This, Harber. Black-leather case inside leather grip there—by the wall. Money in it—and letters. Everything goes—to the girl. Nobody else. I know you're straight. Take 'em to her?"

"Yes," said Harber.

"Good," said Barton. "All right, then! Been expecting this. All ready for it. Name—address—papers—all there. She'll have no trouble—getting money. Thanks, Harber." And after a pause, he added: "Better take it now—save trouble, you know."

Harber got the leather case from the grip and took it at once to his own stateroom.

When he returned, Barton seemed for the moment, with the commission off his mind, a little brighter.

"No end obliged, Harber," he murmured.

"All right," said Harber, "but ought you to talk?"

"Won't matter now," said Barton grimly. "Feel like talking now. To-morrow may be—too late!" And after another pause, he went on: "The fine dreams of youth—odd where they end, isn't it?"

"This—and me—so different. So different! Failure. She was wise—but she didn't know everything. The world was too big—too hard for me. 'You can't fail,' she said, '*I won't let you fail!*' But you see——"

Harber's mind, slipping back down the years, with Barton, to his own parting, stopped with a jerk.

"What!" he exclaimed.

Barton seemed drifting, half conscious, half unconscious of what he was saying. He did not appear to have heard Harber's exclamation over the phrase so like that Janet had given him.

"We weren't like the rest," droned Barton. "No—we wanted more out of life than they did. We couldn't be content—with half a loaf. We wanted—the bravest adventures—the yellowest gold—the . . ."

Picture that scene, if you will. What would *you* have said? Harber saw leaping up before him, with terrible clarity, as if it were etched upon his mind, that night in Tawnleytown ten years before. It was as if Barton, in his semidelirium, were reading the words from *his* past!

"I won't let you fail! . . . half a loaf . . . the bravest adventures . . . the yellowest gold."

Incredible thing! That Barton and *his* girl should have stumbled upon so many of the phrases, the exact phrases! And suddenly full knowledge blinded Harber. . . . No! No! He spurned it. It couldn't be. And yet, he felt that if Barton were to utter one more phrase of those that Janet had said and, many, many times since, written to *him*, the impossible, the unbelievable, would be stark, unassailable fact.

He put his hand upon Barton's arm and gently pressed it.

"Barton," he said, "tell me—Janet—Tawnleytown?"

Barton stared with glassy, unseeing eyes for a moment; then his eyelids fell.

"The bravest adventures—the yellowest gold," he murmured. Then, so faintly as almost to baffle hearing: "Where—all—our—dreams? Gone—aglimmering. Gone."

That was all.

Impossible? No, just very, very improbable. But how, by its very improbability, it does take on the semblance of design! See how by slender a thread the thing hung, how every corner of the plan fitted. Just one slip Janet Spencer made; she let her thoughts and her words slip into a groove; she repeated herself. And how unerringly life had put her finger upon that clew! So reasoned Harber.

Well, if the indictment were true, there was proof to be had in Barton's leather case!

Harber, having called the doctor, went to his stateroom.

He opened the leather case. Inside a cover of yellow oiled silk he found first a certificate of deposit for three thousand pounds, and beneath it a packet of letters.

He unwrapped them.

And, though somehow he had known it without the proof, at the sight of them something caught at his heart with a clutch that made it seem to have stopped beating for a long time. For the sprawling script upon the letters was almost as familiar to him as his own. Slowly he reached down and took

up the topmost letter, drew the thin shiny sheets from the envelope, fluttered them, dazed, and stared at the signature:

Yours, my dearest lover,

JANET.

Just so had she signed *his* letters. It *was* Janet Spencer. Two of her argosies, each one laden with gold for her, had met in their courses, had sailed for a little together.

The first reasonable thought that came to Harber, when he was convinced of the authenticity of the miracle, was that he was free—free to go after the girl he loved, after Vanessa Simola. I think that if he could have done it, he'd have turned the steamer back to the Orient in that moment. The thought that the ship was plunging eastward through a waste of smashing heavy seas was maddening, no less!

He didn't want to see Janet or Tawnleytown, again. He did have, he told me, a fleeting desire to know just how many other ships Janet might have launched, but it wasn't strong enough to take him to see her. He sent her the papers and letters by registered mail under an assumed name.

And then he went to Claridon, Michigan, to learn of her people when Vanessa might be expected home. They told him she was on her way. So, fearing to miss her if he went seeking, he settled down there and stayed until she came. It was seven months of waiting he had . . . but it was worth it in the end.

And that was Harber's romance. Just an incredible coincidence, you say. I know it. I told Harber that. And Mrs. Harber.

And *she* said nothing at all, but looked at me inscrutably, with a flicker of scorn in her sea-gray eyes.

Harber smiled lazily and serenely, and leaned back in his chair, and replied in a superior tone: "My dear Sterne, things that are made in heaven—like my marriage—don't just happen. Can't you see that your stand simply brands you an unbeliever?"

And, of course, I *can* see it. And Harber may be right. I don't know. Does any one, I wonder?

ALMA MATER

By O. F. LEWIS

From The Red Book

PROFESSOR HORACE IRVING had taught Latin for nearly forty years at Huntington College. Then he had come back to Stuyvesant Square, in New York. Now he lived in a little hall bedroom, four flights up, overlooking the Square.

Habitually he walked from the Square westward to Fourth Avenue, in the afternoon, when the weather permitted. He had been born only three doors from where he now lived. The house of his birth had gone. It was sixty years since he had been a boy and played in this Square. Now he would pause at the corner of Fourth Avenue in his walks, and remember the Goelet's cow and the big garden and the high iron fence at Nineteenth Street and Broadway. Great buildings now towered there.

South along Fourth Avenue he would walk, a little man, scarcely five feet four in height, even with the silk hat and the Prince Albert coat. His white hair grew long over his collar, and people would notice that almost more than anything else about him. He may have weighed between ninety and a hundred pounds. The coat was worn and shiny, but immaculate. The tall hat was of a certain type and year, but carefully smoothed and still glossy.

He would pause often, between Nineteenth Street and Eighteenth Street, peopling the skyscrapers with ghosts of a former day, when houses and green gardens lined the streets. The passers-by watched him casually, perhaps as much as any one notices any one else in New York. He was, in the Fourteenth Street district, a rarer specimen than Hindus or Mexican medicine-men. Through the ten years since he had

come, pensioned, from Huntington College, he had become a walking landmark in this region.

He always walked down on the east side of the street, crossing at Fourteenth Street. He was carefully piloted, and saluted, by the traffic policeman. It was a bad crossing. Below Fourteenth Street things looked much more as they had looked when he was young.

The bookstores were an unceasing hobby to the old man. The secondhand dealers never made any objection to his reading books upon the shelves. His purchases were perhaps two books a week, at ten or even five cents each. Now and again he would find one of his own "Irving's Latin Prose Composition" texts in the five-cent pile. Opening the book, he usually would discover strange pencilled pictures drawn scrawlingly over many of the pages. His "Latin Composition" wasn't published after 1882, the year the firm failed. It might have been different for him, with a different publisher.

Late one afternoon in April, Professor Irving stood in his customary niche at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street, watching the traffic from a sheltered spot against the wall of the building. He was becoming exceedingly anxious about the approaching storm. It had come up since he left Stuyvesant Square, and he had no umbrella. He must not get his silk hat wet. His thin overcoat was protecting him but feebly from the wind, which with the disappearance of the sun had grown sharp and biting. It was rapidly becoming dark. Lights were flashing in the windows up and down the Avenue.

The Professor decided to stand in a doorway till the shower had passed over. The chimes in the Metropolitan Tower struck the first quarter after four, the sounds welling in gusts to the old man's ears. A little man came to stand in the doorway beside the Professor. The latter saw that the little man had a big umbrella. Silk hats were so fearfully expensive in these days!

The heavy drops beat against the pavement in torrents. The first flash of lightning of the year was followed by a deep roll of thunder.

"I got to go!" said the little man. "Keep the umbrella! I got another where I work. I'm only fifty-five. You're

older than me, a lot. You better start home. You'll get soaked, standing here!" And the little man was gone before the Professor could reply.

"An exceedingly kindly, simple man," thought the old Professor. He had planned, while standing with his unknown benefactor, that he would go into some store and wait. But now he would chance it, and cross the street. He saw a lull in the traffic. He started and was nearly swept off his feet. He got to the middle of the street. The umbrella grew unwieldy, swinging this way and that, as if tugged by unseen hands. It turned inside out. Blaring noises from the passing cars confused the Professor.

The shaft of the umbrella swung violently around and knocked the silk hat from Professor Irving's head. His white hair was caught by the wind. Lashed in another direction, the shaft now struck the Professor's glasses, and they flew away. Now he could see little or nothing. He became bewildered.

Great glaring headlights broke upon him, passed him, and then immediately other glaring lights flared up toward him out of the sheets of water. He couldn't see because of his lost glasses and because of the stinging rain. He rushed between two cars. He slipped. . . .

The chimes on the Metropolitan Tower rang out, in wails of wild sound, the half-hour after four.

The attendance that evening at the annual banquet of the New York alumni of Huntington College exceeded all previous records. The drive for two million five hundred thousand dollars was on. It was a small college, but as Daniel Webster said of Dartmouth, there were those who loved it.

The east ballroom of the hotel was well filled with diners. Recollections of college days were shouted across tables and over intervening aisles. There was a million still to raise: but old Huntington would put it across! They'd gotten out more of the older men, the men with money, than had ever been seen before at an alumni dinner.

The income on one million would go into better salaries for the professors and other teachers. They'd been shamefully underpaid—men who'd been on the faculty twenty to thirty years getting two thousand! Well, Huntington College had

now a new president, one of the boys of twenty years ago. Yes sir, things were different. It was in the air.

In the midst of the dinner course, the toastmaster rapped loudly with the gavel for attention. It was hard to obtain quiet.

"Men," said the toastmaster, and there was a curious note in his voice, "I ask your absolute silence. Middleton, whom you all know is one of the editorial staff of the *Sphere*, has just come in. He can stay only a few minutes. He came especially to tell you something."

A man standing behind the toastmaster stepped into the toastmaster's place. He was in business clothes, a sharp contrast to the rest of the diners. He was loudly applauded. He raised his right hand and shook his head.

"Boys," he said, "I've got a tragic piece of news for you—for those of you who were in college any time up to ten years ago." He paused and looked the diners over.

"Four fifths of you men who are here to-night knew old Hoddy Irving, our 'prof' in Latin. He served old Huntington College for forty years, the longest term any professor ever served. He made no demands—ever. He took us freshmen under his wing. I used to walk now and then with him, miles around the college, when it wasn't so built up as it now is. He loved the fields and the animals and the trees. He taught me a lot of things besides Latin. Don't you remember the funny little walk he had, sort of a hop forward? Don't you remember the way he'd come up to the college dormitories nights, sometimes, from his house down on the Row, and knock timidly at our doors, and come in and visit? Don't you remember that we used to clear some of those tables mighty quickly, of the chips and the bottles?"

There were titters, and some one shouted: "You said it!"

"And then, don't you remember, that some ten years ago they turned the old man off, with a pension—so-called—of half his salary. But what was his salary? Two thousand dollars—two thousand dollars at the end of forty years!! You and I, and old Huntington College, turned old Hoddy out to pasture, this pasture, on a thousand a year! And to-night, right now, he's lying in Bellevue, both legs broken, skull fractured, and not a damn cent in the world except in-

surance enough to bury him. And to-morrow he'll be ours to bury, boys—old Hoddy Irving!”

A confusion of voices rose in the room, and over them all a “No!” from some one who seemed to cry out in pain.

“Yes!” said Middleton as the murmurs ceased. “Our old Hoddy, starving, loaded up with debt, alone, down in a miserable hall bedroom in Stuyvesant Square. How did I come to know about it? One of our reporters, who covers Bellevue, dug up the story in his day's work. They brought in this old, disheveled, unconscious man—and in his pocket was his name. Kenyon, the reporter, went over to the house on the Square and found there another old fellow that old Hoddy chummed some with, and who knew all the circumstances.

“It seems Hoddy had an invalid old sister—and they hadn't any money except this pension. How the two old souls got along no one will never know. But she died awhile ago, and that put Hoddy into a lot more debt. And this miserable little eighty dollars a month has had to carry him and his debts. And not a whimper that old man utters. Always kindly, Hoddy was, always telling stories from the forty years at Huntington—and we fellows here, a lot of us rotten with money, and not knowing that the old fellow——”

Middleton's voice broke. It was some time before he proceeded.

“This afternoon, at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street, just as that tornado broke, he tried to cross the street. He got in a jam of cars, and of course the windshields were all mussed up with rain, and the chauffeurs couldn't see anything ahead—and they don't know whose car it was. The police say it was just four thirty-one when they picked him up.

“Well, that's all, except that—I'm going down to Bellevue, and if one or two of you want to come—perhaps old Hoddy will know us—even this late.”

Middleton had finished. From various parts of the room came the words: “I'll go! Let me go!” Men were frankly wiping their eyes.

At a distant table arose Martin Delano. He was reputed to be the wealthiest alumnus of Huntington. He was said to have made almost fabulous millions during the war. In the Street he was known as “Merciless Martin.” They were

planning to strike him this evening for at least a hundred thousand.

Martin Delano stood holding the edge of the table with one hand, the other fingering a spoon on the table. He stood there long. Several times he opened his lips as though to speak. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his cheeks and forehead. Evidently he was deeply moved.

"Mr. Toastmaster, may I ask the privilege of going down to Bellevue with Mr. Middleton? I would ask that I be allowed to insist on going down. I have sinned, grievously sinned, in forgetting old Hoddy. Now, when it's too late—Thirty years ago, and more, when I was a green, frightened freshman from Vermont, he took me to his heart. He was known as the Freshman's Friend. That's what Hoddy always did—take the green and frightened freshman to his heart. Probably, if he hadn't done that to me, I'd have gone back home in my lonesomeness. And then—"

"Yes, I have sinned—and it might have been so different. I want to go down there! And I'm coming back here, before you men are through to-night, and I'll tell you more."

At about half-past ten Martin Delano came back. He walked into the room just as one of the speakers had finished. The toastmaster caught his eye and beckoned to him to come to the speaker's table. Delano stood in front of the crowd. He had walked forward, seeing no one on his way.

"Hoddy—Hoddy has gone, boys!"

Then quickly, silently, the three hundred men arose and stood. After a time they heard Delano say: "Sit down, boys!"

He waited till they were seated. "There's a lot that I might tell, men—terrible things—that I won't tell, for it's all over. Just this—and I suppose you're about through now and breaking up. It was the poor old Prof of ours—shattered, deathly white, a lot older. But will you believe it, the same dear old smile, or almost a smile, on his face! Unconscious, but babbling. And about what? The college—Alma Mater! Those were just the words—Alma Mater! The college that gave him the half pay and forgot him on the very night when we are trying to raise a miserable two million, that things like this sha'n't happen again!

"And boys, when we bent over him and whispered our

names, he seemed after a while to understand that we were there—but in the classroom, the old Number 3 in Holmes Hall! And fellows, he called on—on me to recite——”

Merciless Martin Delano couldn't go on. Finally he spoke.

“And so, Mr. President, I wish, sir, as a slight token of my appreciation of what that simple great man has done for Huntington College to give to our Alma Mater—our Alma Mater, sir—the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to be used for the erection of a suitable building, for whatever purpose is most necessary, and that building to be called after Horace Irving.

“And sir, I also desire to give to the fund for properly providing for the salaries of our professors and other teachers, the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars—those men who teach in our Alma Mater.

“And I ask one word more: I have arranged that Professor Irving is to be buried from my house. If you will permit me, I will leave now.”

The alumni of Huntington College were silent. There was no sound, save the occasional pushing of a chair, or the click of a plate or a glass upon the table, as Martin Delano passed from the room.

It was after one o'clock. Martin Delano was in his library, his arms flung across the table, his face between them.

In the opaque blur of swirling rain, his car had passed the corner of Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street at precisely half-past four that afternoon. He had happened to take out his watch at the moment the Metropolitan clock struck the second quarter.

He would never know whether it had been his car or another!

SLOW POISON

By ALICE DUER MILLER

From The Saturday Evening Post

THE Chelmsford divorce had been accomplished with the utmost decorum, not only outwardly in the newspapers, but inwardly among a group of intimate friends. They were a homogeneous couple—were liked by the same people, enjoyed the same things, and held many friends in common. These were able to say with some approach to certainty that everyone had behaved splendidly, even the infant of twenty-three with whom Julian had fallen in love.

Of course there will always be the question—and we used to argue it often in those days—how well a man can behave who, after fifteen perfectly satisfactory years of married life, admits that he has fallen in love with another woman. But if you believe in the clap-of-thunder theory, as I do, why, then, for a man nearing forty, taken off his feet by a blond-headed girl, Julian, too, behaved admirably.

As for Mrs. Julian, there was never any doubt as to her conduct. I used to think her—and I was not alone in the opinion—the most perfect combination of gentleness and power, and charity and humour, that I had ever seen. She was a year or so older than Julian—though she did not look it—and a good deal wiser, especially in the ways of the world; and, oddly enough, one of the features that worried us most in the whole situation was how he was ever going to get on, in the worldly sense, without her. He was to suffer not only from the loss of her counsel but from the lack of her indorsement. There are certain women who are a form of insurance to a man; and Anne gave a poise and solidity to Julian's presentation of himself which his own flibbertigibbet manner made particularly necessary.

I think this view of the matter disturbed Anne herself, though she was too clever to say so; or perhaps too numbed by the utter wreck of her own life to see as clearly as usual the rocks ahead of Julian. It was she, I believe, who first mentioned, who first thought of divorce, and certainly she who arranged the details. Julian, still in the more ideal stage of his emotion, had hardly wakened to the fact that his new love was marriageable. But Mrs. Julian, with the practical eye of her sex, saw in a flash all it might mean to him, at his age, to begin life again with a young beauty who adored him.

She saw this, at least, as soon as she saw anything; for Julian, like most of us when the occasion rises, developed a very pretty power of concealment. He had for a month been seeing Miss Littell every day before any of us knew that he went to see her at all. Certainly Anne, unsuspecting by nature, was unprepared for the revelation.

It took place in the utterly futile, unnecessary way such revelations always do take place. The two poor innocent dears had allowed themselves a single indiscretion; they had gone out together, a few days before Christmas, to buy some small gifts for each other. They had had an adventure with a beggar, an old man wise enough to take advantage of the holiday season, and the no less obvious holiday in the hearts of this pair. He had forced them to listen to some quaint variant of the old story, and they had between them given him all the small change they had left—sixty-seven cents, I think it was.

That evening at dinner Julian, ever so slightly afraid of the long pause, had told Anne the story as if it had happened to him alone. A few days afterward the girl, whom she happened to meet somewhere or other, displaying perhaps a similar nervousness, told the same story. Even the number of cents agreed.

I spoke a moment ago of the extraordinary power of concealment which we all possess; but I should have said the negative power to avoid exciting suspicion. Before that moment, before the finger points at us, the fool can deceive the sage; and afterward not even the sage can deceive the veriest fool.

Julian had no desire to lie to his wife. Indeed, he told me he had felt from the first that she would be his fittest confi-

dante. He immediately told her everything—a dream rather than a narrative.

Nowhere did Anne show her magnanimity more than in accepting the rather extravagant financial arrangements which Julian insisted on making for her. He was not a rich man, and she the better economist of the two. We knew she saw that in popular esteem Julian would pay the price of her pride if she refused, and that in this ticklish moment of his life the least she could do was to let him have the full credit for his generosity.

“And after all,” as she said to me, “young love can afford to go without a good many things necessary to old age.”

It was the nearest I heard her come to a complaint.

As soon as everything was settled she sailed for Florence, where she had friends and where, she intimated, she meant to spend most of her time.

I said good-by to her with real emotion, and the phrase I used as to my wish to serve her was anything but a convention.

Nor did she take it so.

“Help Julian through this next year,” she said. “People will take it harder than he knows. He’ll need you all.” And she was kind enough to add something about my tact. Poor lady! She must have mentally withdrawn her little compliment before we met many times again.

II

Perhaps the only fault in Anne’s education of her husband had been her inability to cling. In his new ménage this error was rectified, and the effect on him was conspicuously good; in fact, I think Rose’s confidence in his greatness pulled them through the difficult time.

For there was no denying that it was difficult. Many people looked coldly on them, and I know there was even some talk of asking him to resign from the firm of architects of which he was a member. The other men were all older, and very conservative. Julian represented to them everything that was modern and dangerous. Granger, the leading spirit, was in the habit of describing himself as holding old-fashioned views, by which he meant that he had all the virtues of the

Pilgrim Fathers and none of their defects. I never liked him, but I could not help respecting him. The worst you could say of him was that his high standards were always successful. You felt that so fanatical a sense of duty ought to have required some sacrifices.

To such a man Julian's conduct appeared not only immoral but inadvisable, and unfitting in a young man, especially without consulting his senior partners.

We used to say among ourselves that Granger's reason for wanting to get rid of Julian was not any real affection for the dim old moral code, but rather his acute realization that without Anne his junior partner was a less valuable asset.

Things were still hanging fire when I paid her the first of my annual visits. She was dreadfully distressed at my account of the situation. She had the manner one sometimes sees in dismissed nurses who meet their former little charges unwashed or uncared for. She could hardly believe it was no longer her business to put the whole matter right.

"Can't she do something for him?" she said. "Make her bring him a great building. That would save him."

It was this message that I carried home to Rose; at least I suggested the idea to her as if it were my own. I had my doubts of her being able to carry it out.

Out of loyalty to Julian, or perhaps I ought to say out of loyalty to Anne, we had all accepted Rose, but we should soon have loved her in any case. She was extraordinarily sweet and docile, and gave us, those at least who were not parents, our first window to the east, our first link with the next generation, just at the moment when we were relinquishing the title ourselves. I am afraid that some of the males among us envied Julian more than perhaps in the old days we had ever envied him Anne.

But we hardly expected her to further his career as Anne had done, and yet, oddly enough, that was exactly what she did. Her methods had all the effectiveness of youth and complete conviction. She forced Julian on her friends and relations, not so much on his account as on theirs. She wanted them to be sure of the best. The result was that orders flowed in. Things took a turn for the better and continued to improve, as I was able to report to Anne when I went to see her at Florence or at Paris. She was always well lodged, well

served, and surrounded by the pleasantest people; yet each time I saw her she had a look exiled and circumscribed, a look I can only describe as that of a spirit in reduced circumstances.

She was always avid for details of Julian and all that concerned him; and as times improved I was stupid enough to suppose I pleased her by giving them from the most favourable angle. It seemed to me quite obvious, as I saw how utterly she had ruined her own life, that she ought at least to have the comfort of knowing that she had not sacrificed it in vain. And so I allowed myself, not an exaggeration but a candour more unrestrained than would be usual in the circumstances.

Led on by her burning interest I told her many things I might much better have kept to myself; not only accounts of his work and his household and any new friends in our old circle, but we had all been amazed to see a sense of responsibility develop in Julian in answer to his new wife's dependence on him. With this had come a certain thoughtfulness in small attentions, which, I saw too late, Anne must always have missed in him. She was so much more competent in the smaller achievements of life than he that it had been wisdom to leave them to her; and Anne had often traveled alone and attended to the luggage, when now Rose was personally conducted like a young empress. The explanation was simple enough: Anne had the ability to do it, and the other had not. Even if I had stopped to think, I might fairly have supposed that Anne would find some flattery in the contrast. I should have been wrong.

Almost the first thing she asked me was whether he came home to luncheon. In old times, though his house was only a few blocks from his office, he had always insisted that it took too much time. Anne had never gained her point with him, though she put some force into the effort. Now I had to confess he did.

"It's much better for him," she said with pleasure, and quite deceived me; herself, too, perhaps.

Yet even I, for all my blindness, felt some uneasiness the year Rose's son was born. I do not think the desire for offspring had ever taken up a great deal of room in Julian's consciousness, but of course Anne had wanted children, and I felt very cruel, sitting in her little apartment in Paris, de-

scribing the baby who ought to have been hers. How different her position would have been now if she had some thin-legged little girl to educate or some raw-boned boy to worry over; and there was that overblessed woman at home, necessary not only to Julian but to Julian's son.

It was this same year, but at a later visit, that I first became aware of a change in Anne. At first the charm of her surroundings, her pretty clothes, even to the bright little buckles on her shoes, blinded me to the fact that she herself was changed. I do not mean that she was aged. One of the delightful things about her was that she was obviously going to make an admirable old lady; the delicate boniness of her face and the clearness of her skin assured that. This was a change more fundamental. Even in her most distracted days Anne had always maintained a certain steadiness of head. She had trodden thorny paths, but she had always known where she was going. I had seen her eyelids red, but I had never failed to find in the eyes themselves the promise of a purpose. But now it was gone. I felt as if I were looking into a little pool which had been troubled by a stone, and I waiting vainly for the reflection to re-form itself.

So painful was the impression that before I sailed for home I tried to convey to her the dangers of her mood.

"I think you are advising me to be happy," she said.

"I am advising no such thing," I answered. "I am merely pointing out that you run the risk of being more unhappy than you are. My visits—or rather the news I bring you—are too important to you. You make me feel as if it were the only event of the year—to you who have always had such an interesting life of your own."

"I have not had a life of my own since I was twenty," she returned. It was at twenty she had married.

"Then think of Julian," I said, annoyed not only at my own clumsiness but at the absence of anything of Anne's old heroic spirit. "For his sake, at least, you must keep your head. Why, my dear woman, one look at your face, grown as desperate as it sometimes appears now, would ruin Julian with the whole world. Even I, knowing the whole story, would find it hard to forgive him if you should fail to continue to be the splendid triumphant creature whom we know you were designed to be."

She gave me a long queer look, which meant something tremendous. Evidently my words had made an impression. They had, but not just the one I intended.

III

One of the first people I always saw on returning was Julian. How often he thought of Anne I do not know, but he spoke of her with the greatest effort. He invariably took care to assure himself that she was physically well, but beyond this it would have been a brave person who dared to go. He did not want to hear the details of her life and appearance.

It was with some trepidation, therefore, that a few months after this I came to tell him that Anne was about to return to America. Why she was coming, or for how long, her letter did not say. I only knew that the second Saturday in December would see her among us again. It seemed fair to assume that her stay would not be long. Julian evidently thought so for he arranged to be in the West for three or four weeks.

I went to meet her. The day was cold and rainy, and as soon as I saw her I made up my mind that the crossing had been a bad one, and I was glad no one else had come to the wharf with me. She was standing by the rail, wrapped in a voluminous fur coat—the fashions were slim in the extreme—and her hat was tied on by a blue veil.

I may as well admit that from the moment I heard of her projected return I feared that her real motive for coming, conscious or unconscious, was to see Julian again. So when I told her of his absence I was immensely relieved that she took it as a matter of course.

"I suppose we might have met," she observed. "As it is, I can go about without any fear of an awkward encounter." I say I was relieved, but I was also excessively puzzled. Why had Anne come home?

It was a question I was to hear answered in a variety of ways during the next few months, by many of Anne's friends and partisans; for, as I think I have said, Anne had inspired great attachment since her earliest days. Why had she come home? they exclaimed. Why not, pray? Had she done anything criminal that she was to be exiled? Did I think it

pleasant to live abroad on a small income? Even if she could get on without her friends, could they do without her?

The tone of these questions annoyed me not a little when I heard them, which was not for some time. Soon after Anne's arrival I, too, was called away, and it was not until February that I returned and was met by the carefully set piece—Anne the Victim.

With that ill-advised self-confidence of which I have already made mention, I at once set about demolishing this picture. I told Anne's friends, who were also mine, that she would thank them very little for their attitude. I found myself painting her life abroad as a delirium of intellect and luxury. I even found myself betraying professional secrets and arguing with total strangers as to the amount of her income.

Even in Montreal faint echoes of this state of things had reached me, but not until I went to see Anne on my return did I get any idea of their cause. She had taken a furnished apartment from a friend, in a dreary building in one of the West Forties. Only a jutting front of limestone and an elevator man in uniform saved it, or so it seemed to me, from being an old-fashioned boarding house. Its windows, small, as if designed for an African sun, looked northward upon a darkened street. Anne's apartment was on the second floor, and the requirements of some caryatids on the outside rendered her fenestration particularly meager. Her friend, if indeed it were a friend, had not treated her generously in the matter of furniture. She had left nothing superfluous but two green glass jugs on the mantelpiece, and had covered the chairs with a chintz, the groundwork of which was mustard colour.

Another man who was there when I came in, who evidently had known Anne in different surroundings, expressed the most hopeful view possible when he said that doubtless it would all look charming when she had arranged her own belongings.

Anne made a little gesture. "I haven't any belongings," she said.

I didn't know what she meant, perhaps merely a protest against the tyranny of things, but I saw the effect her speech produced on her auditor. Perhaps she saw it, too, for presently she added: "Oh, yes! I have one."

And she went away, and came back carrying a beautiful old silver loving cup. I knew it well.

It came from Julian's forebears. Anne had always loved it, and I was delighted that she should have it now. She set it on a table before a mirror, and here it did a double share to make the room possible.

When we were alone I expressed my opinion of her choice of lodgings.

"This sunless cavern!" I said. "This parlour-car furniture!"

She looked a little hurt. "You don't like it?" she said.

"Do you?" I snapped back.

After a time I had recourse to the old argument that it didn't look well; that it wasn't fair to Julian. But she had been expecting this.

"My dear Walter," she answered, "you must try to be more consistent. In Paris you told me that I must cease to regulate my life by Julian. You were quite right. This place pleases me, and I don't intend to go to a hotel, which I hate, or to take a house, which is a bother, in order to soothe Julian's feelings. I have begun to lead my life to suit myself."

The worst of it was, I could think of no answer.

A few evenings afterward we dined at the same house. Anne arrived with a scarf on her head, under the escort of a maid. She had come in a trolley car. Nobody's business but her own, perhaps, if she would have allowed it to remain so, but when she got up to go, and other people were talking of their motors' being late, Anne had to say: "Mine is never late; it goes past the corner every minute."

I could almost hear a sigh, "Poor angel!" go round the room.

The next thing that happened was that Julian sent for me. He was in what we used to call in the nursery "a state."

"What's this I hear about Anne's being hard up?" he said. "Living in a nasty flat, and going out to dinner in the cars?" And he wouldn't listen to an explanation. "She must take more; she must be made to take more."

I had one of my most unfortunate inspirations. I thought I saw an opportunity for Julian to make an impression.

"I don't think she would listen to me," I said. "Why don't you get Mr. Granger to speak to her?"

The idea appealed to Julian. He admired Mr. Granger, and remembered that he and Anne had been friends. Whereas I thought, of course, that Mr. Granger would thus be made

to see that the fault, if there were a fault, was not of Julian's generosity. Stupidly enough I failed to see that if Julian's offer was graceful Anne's gesture of refusal would be upon a splendid scale.

And it must have been very large, indeed, to stir old Granger as it did. He told me there had been tears in his eyes while she spoke of her husband's kindness. Kindness! He could not but compare her surroundings with the little house, all geraniums and muslin curtains, in which the new Mrs. Chelmsford was lodged. Anne had refused, of course. In the circumstances she could not accept. She said she had quite enough for a single woman. The phrase struck Granger as almost unbearably pathetic.

One day I noticed the loving cup—which was always on Anne's table, which was admired by everyone who came to the apartment, and was said to recall her, herself, so pure and graceful and perfect—one day the loving cup was gone.

I was so surprised when my eye fell on its vacant place that I blurted out: "Goodness, Anne, where's your cup?"

The next moment I could have bitten out my tongue. Anne stood still in the middle of the room, twisting her hands a little, and everyone—there were three or four of us there—stopped talking.

"Oh," she said. "oh, Walter, I know you'll scold me for being officious and wrong-headed, but I have sent the cup back to Julian's son. I think he ought to have it."

Everyone else thought the deed extremely noble. I took my hat and went to Rose. Rose was not very enthusiastic. A beautiful letter had accompanied the cup. We discussed the advisability of sending it back; but of course that would have done no good. The devilish part of a favour is that to accept or reject it is often equally incriminating. Anne held the situation in the hollow of her hand. Besides, as Rose pointed out, we couldn't very well return it without asking Julian, and we had both agreed that for the present Julian had better remain in ignorance of the incident. He would have thought it mean-spirited to allow any instance of Anne's generosity to remain concealed from the public. Rose and I were willing to allow it to drop.

I was sorry, therefore, when I found, soon after, not only that everyone knew of the gift but that phrases of the beauti-

ful letter itself were current, with marks of authenticity upon them. It was not hard to trace them to Anne's intimates.

I have no idea to this day whether Anne was deliberately trying to ruin the man for whom she had sacrificed so much; or whether one of those large, unconscious, self-indulgent movements of our natures was carrying her along the line of least resistance. There are some people, I know, who can behave well only so long as they have the centre of the stage, and are driven by a necessity almost moral to regain such a place at any cost, so that they may once again begin the exercise of their virtues.

Anne's performance was too perfect, I thought, for conscious art, and she was not a genius. She was that most dangerous of all engines, a good person behaving wickedly. All her past of high-mindedness and kindness protected her now like an armour from the smallest suspicion. All the grandeur of her conduct at the time of the divorce was remembered as a proof that she at least had a noble soul. Who could doubt that she wished him well?

If so, she soon appeared to be the only person who did. For, as we all know, pity is one of the most dangerous passions to unloose. It demands a victim. We rise to pathos, only over the dead bodies of our nearest and dearest.

Every phrase, every gesture of Anne's stirred one profoundly, and it was inevitable, I suppose, that Julian should be selected as the sacrifice. I noticed that people began to speak of him in the past, though he was still moving among us—"As Julian used to say."

He and Anne fortunately never met, but she and the new Mrs. Julian had one encounter in public. If even then Anne would have shown the slightest venom all might still have been well. But, no, the worn, elderly woman, face to face with the young beauty who had possessed herself of everything in the world, showed nothing but a tenderness so perfect that every heart was wrung. I heard Rose criticized for not receiving her in the same spirit.

The next day Julian was blackballed at a philanthropic club at which he had allowed himself to be proposed merely from a sense of civic duty.

Over the incident I know Anne wept. I heard her tears. "Oh, if I could have spared him that!" she said.

My eyes were cold, but those of Mr. Granger, who came in while her eyelids were still red, were full of fire.

She spent a week with the Grangers that summer. The whole family—wife, sons and daughters—had all yielded to the great illusion.

It must not be supposed that I had failed to warn Julian. The supineness of his attitude was one of the most irritating features of the case. He answered me as if I were violating the dead; asked me if by any chance I didn't see he deserved all he was getting.

No one was surprised when in the autumn he resigned from his firm. There had been friction between the partners for some time. Soon afterward he and Rose sailed for Italy, where they have lived ever since. He had scarcely any income except that which he made in his profession; his capital had gone to Anne. He probably thought that what he had would go further abroad.

I do not know just how Anne took his departure, except that I am sure she was wonderful about it. I had ceased to see her. She has, however, any number of new friends, whose fresh interest in her story keeps it continually alive. She has given up her ugly flat and taken a nice little house, and in summer I notice she has red geraniums in the window boxes. I often see a nice little motor standing before her door—the result doubtless of a year's economy.

Whenever her friends congratulate her on the improvement in her finances she says she owes it all to me—I am such an excellent man of business.

"I admire Walter so much," I am told she says, "though I'm afraid I have lost him as a friend. But then, in the last few years I have lost so much." And she smiles that brave sad smile of hers.

THE FACE IN THE WINDOW

By WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY

From The Red Book

AT NINE O'CLOCK this morning Sheriff Crumpett entered our New England town post-office for his mail. From his box he extracted his monthly Grand Army paper and a letter in a long yellow envelope. This envelope bore the return-stamp of a prominent Boston lumber-company. The old man crossed the lobby to the writing-shelf under the Western Union clock, hooked black-rimmed glasses on a big nose and tore a generous inch from the end of the envelope.

The first inclosure which met his eyes was a check. It was heavy and pink and crisp, and was attached to the single sheet of letter-paper with a clip. Impressed into the fabric of the safety-paper were the indelible figures of a protector: *Not over Five Thousand (\$5000) Dollars.*

The sheriff read the name of the person to whom it was payable and gulped. His gnarled old hand trembled with excitement as he glanced over the clipped letter and then went through it again.

November 10, 1919.

MY DEAR SHERIFF:

Enclosed please find my personal check for five thousand dollars. It is made out to Mrs. McBride. Never having known the lady personally, and because you have evidently represented her with the authorities, I am sending it to you for proper delivery. I feel, from your enthusiastic account of her recent experience, that it will give you pleasure to present it to her.

Under the circumstances I do not begrudge the money. When first advised of Ruggam's escape, it was hot-headed impulse which prompted me to offer a reward so large. The old clan-blood of the Wileys must have made me murder-mad that Ruggam should regain his freedom permanently after the hellish thing he did to my brother. The newspapers heard of it, and then I could not retract.

That, however, is a thing of the past. I always did detest a welcher

and if this money is going to a woman to whom it will be manna from heaven—to use your words—I am satisfied. Convey to her my personal congratulations, gratitude and best wishes.

Cordially yours,
C. V. D. WILEY.

“Good old Chris!” muttered the sheriff. “He’s rich because he’s white.” He thrust both check and letter back into the long envelope and headed for the office of our local daily paper at a smart pace.

The earning of five thousand dollars reward-money by Cora McBride made an epochal news-item, and in that night’s paper we headlined it accordingly—not omitting proper mention of the sheriff and giving him appropriate credit.

Having so started the announcement permeating through the community, the old man employed the office phone and called the local livery-stable. He ordered a rig in which he might drive at once to the McBride house in the northern part of town.

“But half that money ought to be yourn!” protested the proprietor of the stable as the sheriff helped him “gear up the horse” a few minutes later.

“Under the circumstances, Joseph, can you see me takin’ it? No; it ain’t in me to horn in for no rake-off on one o’ the Lord’s miracles.”

The old man climbed into the sleigh, took the reins from the liveryman and started the horse from the livery yard.

Two weeks ago—on Monday, the twenty-seventh of the past October—the telephone-bell rang sharply in our newspaper-office a few moments before the paper went to press. Now, the telephone-bell often rings in our newspaper-office a few moments before going to press. The confusion on this particular Monday afternoon, however, resulted from Albany calling on the long-distance. Albany—meaning the nearest office of the international press-association of which our paper is a member—called just so, out of a clear sky, on the day McKinley was assassinated, on the day the *Titanic* foundered and on the day Austria declared war on Serbia.

The connection was made, and over the wire came the voice of young Stewart, crisp as lettuce.

“Special dispatch . . . Wyndgate, Vermont, October 27th. . . . Ready?”

The editor of our paper answered in the affirmative. The rest of us grouped anxiously around his chair. Stewart proceeded:

"Hapwell Ruggam, serving a life-sentence for the murder of Deputy Sheriff Martin Wiley at a Lost Nation kitchen-dance two years ago, killed Jacob Lambwell, his guard, and escaped from prison at noon to-day.

"Ruggam had been given some repair work to do near the outer prison-gate. It was opened to admit a tradesman's automobile. As Guard Lambwell turned to close the gate, Ruggam felled him with his shovel. He escaped to the adjacent railroad-yards, stole a corduroy coat and pair of blue overalls hanging in a switchman's shanty and caught the twelve-forty freight up Green River.' "

Stewart had paused. The editor scribbled frantically. In a few words aside he explained to us what Stewart was sending. Then he ordered the latter to proceed.

"Freight Number Eight was stopped by telegraph near Norwall. The fugitive, assuming correctly that it was slowing down for search, was seen by a brakeman fleeing across a pasture between the tracks and the eastern edge of Haystack Mountain. Several posses have already started after him, and sheriffs all through northern New England are being notified.

"Christopher Wiley, lumber magnate and brother of Ruggam's former victim, on being told of the escape, has offered a reward of five thousand dollars for Ruggam's capture, dead or alive. Guard Lambwell was removed to a hospital, where he died at one-thirty'. . . . *All right?*"

The connection was broken, and the editor removed the headpiece. He began giving orders. We were twenty minutes behind usual time with the papers, but we made all the trains.

When the big Duplex was grinding out newsprint with a roar that shook the building, the boys and girls gathered around to discuss the thing which had happened.

The Higgins boy, saucer-eyed over the experience of being "on the inside" during the handling of the first sizable news-story since he had become our local reporter, voiced the interrogation on the faces of other office newcomers.

"Ruggam," the editor explained, "is a poor unfortunate who should have been sent to an asylum instead of the peni-

tentiary. He killed Mart Wiley, a deputy sheriff, at a Lost Nation kitchen-dance two years ago."

"Where's the Lost Nation?"

"It's a term applied to most of the town of Partridgeville in the northern part of the county—an inaccessible district back in the mountains peopled with gone-to-seed stock and half-civilized illiterates who only get into the news when they load up with squirrel whisky and start a programme of progressive hell. Ruggam was the local blacksmith."

"What's a kitchen-dance?"

"Ordinarily a kitchen-dance is harmless enough. But the Lost Nation folks use it as an excuse for a debauch. They gather in some sizable shack, set the stove out into the yard, soak themselves in aromatic spirits of devilry and dance from Saturday night until Monday noon——"

"And this Ruggam killed a sheriff at one of them?"

"He got into a brawl with another chap about his wife. Someone passing saw the fight and sent for an officer. Mart Wiley was deputy, afraid of neither man, God nor devil. Martin had grown disgusted over the petty crime at these kitchen-dances and started out to clean up this one right. Hap Ruggam killed him. He must have had help, because he first got Mart tied to a tree in the yard. Most of the crowd was pie-eyed by this time, anyhow, and would fight at the drop of a hat. After tying him securely, Ruggam caught up a billet of wood and—and killed him with that."

"Why didn't they electrocute him?" demanded young Higgins.

"Well, the murder wasn't exactly premeditated. Hap wasn't himself; he was drunk—not even able to run away when Sheriff Crumpett arrived in the neighbourhood to take him into custody. Then there was Hap's bringing up. All these made extenuating circumstances."

"There was something about Sheriff Wiley's pompadour," suggested our little lady proofreader.

"Yes," returned the editor. "Mart had a queer head of hair. It was dark and stiff, and he brushed it straight back in a pompadour. When he was angry or excited, it actually rose on his scalp like wire. Hap's counsel made a great fuss over Mart's pompadour and the part it sort of played in egging Hap on. The sight of it, stiffening and rising the way it did

maddened Ruggam so that he beat it down hysterically in retaliation for the many grudges he fancied he owed the officer. No, it was all right to make the sentence life-imprisonment, only it should have been an asylum. Hap's not right. You'd know it without being told. I guess it's his eyes. They aren't mates. They light up weirdly when he's drunk or excited, and if you know what's healthy, you get out of the way."

By eight o'clock that evening most of the valley's deer-hunters, all of the local adventurers who could buy, borrow or beg a rifle, and the usual quota of high-school sons of thoughtless parents were off on the man-hunt in the eastern mountains.

Among them was Sheriff Crumpett's party. On reaching the timber-line they separated. It was agreed that if any of them found signs of Ruggam, the signal for assistance was five shots in quick succession "and keep shooting at intervals until the rest come up."

We newspaper folk awaited the capture with professional interest and pardonable excitement. . . .

In the northern part of our town, a mile out on the Wickford road, is the McBride place. It is a small white house with a red barn in the rear and a neat rail fence inclosing the whole. Six years ago Cora McBride was bookkeeper in the local garage. Her maiden name was Allen. The town called her "Tomboy Allen." She was the only daughter of old Zeb Allen, for many years our county game-warden. Cora, as we had always known—and called—her, was a full-blown, red-blooded, athletic girl who often drove cars for her employer in the days when steering-wheels manipulated by women were offered as clinching proof that society was headed for the dogs.

Duncan McBride was chief mechanic in the garage repair-shop. He was an affable, sober, steady chap, popularly known as "Dunk the Dauntless" because of an uncanny ability to cope successfully with the ailments of 90 per cent. of the internal-combustion hay-balers and refractory tin-Lizzies in the county when other mechanics had given them up in disgust.

When he married his employer's bookkeeper, Cora's folks gave her a wedding that carried old Zeb within half an hour

of insolvency and ran to four columns in the local daily. Duncan and the Allen girl motored to Washington in a demonstration-car, and while Dunk was absent, the yard of the garage resembled the premises about a junkshop. On their return they bought the Johnson place, and Cora quickly demonstrated the same furious enthusiasm for homemaking and motherhood that she had for athletics and carburetors.

Three years passed, and two small boys crept about the yard behind the white rail fence. Then—when Duncan and his wife were “making a great go of matrimony” in typical Yankee fashion—came the tragedy that took all the vim out of Cora, stole the ruddy glow from her girlish features and made her middle-aged in a twelvemonth. In the infantile-paralysis epidemic which passed over New England three years ago the McBrides suffered the supreme sorrow—twice. Those small boys died within two weeks of each other.

Duncan of course kept on with his work at the garage. He was quieter and steadier than ever. But when we drove into the place to have a carburetor adjusted or a rattle tightened, we saw only too plainly that on his heart was a wound the scars of which would never heal. As for Cora, she was rarely seen in the village.

Troubles rarely come singly. One afternoon this past August, Duncan completed repairs on Doc Potter's runabout. Cranking the machine to run it from the workshop, the “dog” on the safety-clutch failed to hold. The acceleration of the engine threw the machine into high. Dunk was pinned in front while the roadster leaped ahead and rammed the delivery truck of the Red Front Grocery.

Duncan was taken to our memorial hospital with internal injuries and dislocation of his spine. He remained there many weeks. In fact, he had been home only a couple of days when the evening stage left in the McBride letter-box the daily paper containing the story of Ruggam's “break” and of the reward offered for his capture.

Cora returned to the kitchen after obtaining the paper and sank wearily into a wooden chair beside the table with the red cloth. Spreading out the paper, she sought the usual mental distraction in the three- and four-line bits which make up our local columns.

As the headlines caught her eye, she picked up the paper

and entered the bedroom where Duncan lay. There were telltale traces of tears on his unshaven face, and an ache in his discouraged heart that would not be assuaged; for it was becoming rumoured about the village that Dunk the Dauntless might never operate on the vitals of an ailing tin-Lizzie again.

"Dunnie," cried his wife, "Hap Ruggam's escaped!" Sinking down beside the bedroom lamp, she read him the article aloud.

Her husband's name was mentioned therein; for when the sheriff had commandeered an automobile from the local garage to convey him and his posse to Lost Nation and secure Ruggam, Duncan had been called forth to preside at the steering-wheel. He had thus assisted in the capture and later had been a witness at the trial.

The reading ended, the man rolled his head.

"If I wasn't held here, I might go!" he said. "I might try for that five thousand myself!"

Cora was sympathetic enough, of course, but she was fast approaching the stage where she needed sympathy herself.

"We caught him over on the Purcell farm," mused Duncan. "Something ailed Ruggam. He was drunk and couldn't run. But that wasn't all. He had had some kind of crazy-spell during or after the killing and wasn't quite over it. We tied him and lifted him into the auto. His face was a sight. His eyes aren't mates, anyhow, and they were wild and unnatural. He kept shrieking something about a head of hair—black hair—sticks up like wire. He must have had an awful impression of Mart's face and that hair of his."

"I remember about Aunt Mary Crumpett's telling me of the trouble her husband had with his prisoner in the days before the trial," his wife replied. "He had those crazy-spells often, nights. He kept yelling that he saw Martin Wiley's head with its peculiar hair, and his face peering in at him through the cell window. Sometimes he became so bad that Sheriff Crumpett thought he'd have apoplexy. Finally he had to call Dr. Johnson to attend him."

"Five thousand dollars!" muttered Duncan. "Gawd! I'd hunt the devil *for nothing* if I only had a chance of getting out of this bed."

Cora smoothed her husband's rumpled bed, comforted him and laid her own tired head down beside his hand. When he had dozed off, she arose and left the room.

In the kitchen she resumed her former place beside the table with the cheap red cloth; and there, with her face in her hands, she stared into endless distance.

"Five thousand dollars! Five thousand dollars!" Over and over she whispered the words, with no one to hear.

The green-birch fire snapped merrily in the range. The draft sang in the flue. Outside, a soft, feathery snow was falling, for winter came early in the uplands of Vermont this past year. To Cora McBride, however, the winter meant only hardship. Within another week she must go into town and secure work. Not that she minded the labour nor the trips through the vicious weather! The anguish was leaving Duncan through those monotonous days before he should be up and around. Those dreary winter days! What might they not do to him—alone.

Five thousand dollars! Like many others in the valley that night she pictured with fluttering heart what it would mean to possess such a sum of money; but not once in her pitiful flight of fancy did she disregard the task which must be performed to gain that wealth.

It meant traveling upward in the great snowbound reaches of Vermont mountain-country and tracking down a murderer who had killed a second time to gain his freedom and would stop at nothing again.

And yet—*five thousand dollars!*

How much will a person do, how far will a normal human being travel, to earn five thousand dollars—if the need is sufficiently provocative?

As Cora McBride sat there in the homely little farmhouse kitchen and thought of the debts still existent, contracted to save the already stricken lives of two little lads forgotten now by all but herself and Duncan and God, of the chances of losing their home if Duncan could work no more and pay up the balance of their mortgage, of the days when Duncan must lie in the south bedroom alone and count the figures on the wall-paper—as she sat there and contemplated these things, into Cora McBride's heart crept determination.

At first it was only a faint challenge to her courage. As the

minutes passed, however, her imagination ran riot, with five thousand dollars to help them in their predicament. The challenge grew. Multitudes of women down all the years had attempted wilder ventures for those who were dear to them. Legion in number had been those who set their hands and hearts to greater tasks, made more improbable sacrifices, taken greater chances. Multitudes of them, too, had won—on little else than the courage of ignorance and the strength of desperation.

She had no fear of the great outdoors, for she had lived close to the mountains from childhood and much of her old physical resiliency and youthful daredeviltry remained. And the need was terrible; no one anywhere in the valley, not even her own people, knew how terrible.

Cora McBride, alone by her table in the kitchen, that night made her decision.

She took the kitchen lamp and went upstairs. Lifting the top of a leather trunk, she found her husband's revolver. With it was a belt and holster, the former filled with cartridges. In the storeroom over the back kitchen she unhooked Duncan's mackinaw and found her own toboggan-cap. From a corner behind some fishing-rods she salvaged a pair of summer-dried snowshoes; they had facilitated many a previous hike in the winter woods with her man of a thousand adventures. She searched until she found the old army-haversack Duncan used as a game-bag. Its shoulder-straps were broken but a length of rope sufficed to bind it about her shoulders, after she had filled it with provisions.

With this equipment she returned below-stairs. She drew on heavy woollen stockings and buckled on arctics. She entered the cold pantry and packed the knapsack with what supplies she could find at the hour. She did not forget a drinking-cup, a hunting-knife or matches. In her blouse she slipped a household flash-lamp.

Dressed finally for the adventure, from the kitchen she called softly to her husband. He did not answer. She was overwhelmed by a desire to go into the south bedroom and kiss him, so much might happen before she saw him again. But she restrained herself. She must not waken him.

She blew out the kerosene lamp, gave a last glance about

ner familiar kitchen and went out through the shed door, closing it softly behind her.

It was one of those close, quiet nights when the bark of a distant dog or whinny of a horse sounds very near at hand. The snow was falling feathery.

An hour later found her far to the eastward, following an old side road that led up to the Harrison lumber-job. She had meantime paid Dave Sheldon, a neighbour's boy, encountered by his gate, to stay with Duncan during her absence which she explained with a white lie. But her conscience did not bother. Her conscience might be called upon to smother much more before the adventure was ended.

Off in the depths of the snowing night she strode along, a weird figure against the eerie whiteness that illumined the winter world. She felt a strange wild thrill in the infinite out-of-doors. The woodsman's blood of her father was having its little hour.

And she knew the woods. Intuitively she felt that if Ruggam was on Haystack Mountain making his way toward Lost Nation, he would strike for the shacks of the Green Mountain Club or the deserted logging-camps along the trail, secreting himself in them during his pauses for rest, for he had no food, and provisions were often left in these structures by hunters and mountain hikers. Her plan was simple. She would investigate each group of buildings. She had the advantage of starting on the northwest side of Haystack. She would be working toward Ruggam, while the rest of the posses were trailing him.

Mile after mile she covered. She decided it must be midnight when she reached the ghostly buildings of the Harrison tract, lying white and silent under the thickening snow. It was useless to search these cabins; they were too near civilization. Besides, if Ruggam had left the freight at Norwall on the eastern side of Haystack at noon, he had thirty miles to travel before reaching the territory from which she was starting. So she skirted the abandoned quiet of the clearing, laid the snowshoes properly down before her and bound the thongs securely about her ankles.

She had plenty of time to think of Ruggam as she padded along. He had no snowshoes to aid him, unless he had man-

aged to secure a pair by burglary, which was improbable. So it was not difficult to calculate about where she should begin watching for him. She believed he would keep just off the main trail to avoid detection, yet take its general direction in order to secure shelter and possible food from the mountain buildings. When she reached the country in which she might hope to encounter him, she would zigzag across that main trail in order to pick up his foot-tracks if he had passed her undetected. In that event she would turn and follow. She knew that the snow was falling too heavily to continue in such volume indefinitely; it would stop as suddenly as it had started.

The hours of the night piled up. The silent, muffling snowfall continued. And Cora McBride began to sense an alarming weariness. It finally dawned upon her that her old-time vigour was missing. The strength of youth was hers no longer. Two experiences of motherhood and no more exercise than was afforded by the tasks of her household, had softened her muscles. Their limitations were now disclosed.

The realization of those limitations was accompanied by panic. She was still many miles even from Blind Brook Cabin, and her limbs were afire from the unaccustomed effort. This would never do. After pauses for breath that were coming closer and closer together, she set her lips each time grimly. "Tomboy Allen" had not counted on succumbing to physical fatigue before she had climbed as far as Blind Brook. If she were weakening already, what of those many miles on the other side?

Tuesday the twenty-eighth of October passed with no tidings of Ruggam's capture. The Holmes boy was fatally shot by a rattleheaded searcher near Five-Mile Pond, and distraught parents began to take thought of their own lads missing from school. Adam MacQuarry broke his leg near the Hell Hollow schoolhouse and was sent back by friends on a borrowed bobsled. Several ne'er-do-wells, long on impulse and short on stickability, drifted back to more comfortable quarters during the day, contending that if Hap were captured, the officers would claim the reward anyhow—so what was the use bucking the System?

The snowfall stopped in the early morning. Sunrise dis-

closed the world trimmed from horizon to horizon in fairy fluff. Householders jocosely shoveled their walks; small children resurrected attic sleds; here and there a farmer appeared on Main Street during the forenoon in a pung-sleigh or cutter with jingling bells. The sun soared higher, and the day grew warmer. Eaves began dripping during the noon hour, to stop when the sun sank about four o'clock behind Bancroft's hill.

After the sunset came a perfect evening. The starlight was magic. Many people called in at the newspaper-office, after the movies, to learn if the man hunt had brought results.

Between ten and eleven o'clock the lights on the valley floor blinked out; the town had gone to bed—that is, the lights blinked out in all homes excepting those on the eastern outskirts, where nervous people worried over the possibilities of a hungry, hunted convict's burglarizing their premises, or drawn-faced mothers lived mentally through a score of calamities befalling red-blooded sons who had now been absent twenty-four hours.

Sometime between nine o'clock and midnight—she had no way of telling accurately—Cora McBride stumbled into the Lyons clearing. No one would have recognized in the staggering, bedraggled apparition that emerged from the silhouette of the timber the figure that had started so confidently from the Harrison tract the previous evening.

For over an hour she had hobbled blindly. It was wholly by accident that she had stumbled into the clearing. And the capture of Ruggam had diminished in importance. Warm food, water that would not tear her raw throat, a place to lie and recoup her strength after the chilling winter night—these were the only things that counted now. Though she knew it not, in her eyes burned the faint light of fever. When a snag caught her snowshoe and tripped her, there was hysteria in her cry of resentment.

As she moved across from the timber-line her hair was revealed fallen down; she had lost a glove, and one hand and wrist were cruelly red where she had plunged them several times into the snow to save herself from falling upon her face. She made but a few yards before the icy thong of her right snowshoe snapped. She did not bother to repair it. Carry-

ing it beneath her arm, she hobbled brokenly toward the shelter of the buildings.

Her failure at the other cabins, the lack, thus far, of all signs of the fugitive, the vastness of the hunting-ground magnified by the loneliness of winter, had convinced her finally that her quest was futile. It was all a venture of madness. The idea that a woman, alone and single-handed, with no weapon but a revolver, could track down and subdue a desperate murderer in winter mountains where hardly a wild thing stirred, and make him return with her to the certain penalty—this proved how much mental mischief had again been caused by the lure of money. The glittering seduction of gold had deranged her. She realized it now, her mind normal in an exhausted body. So she gained the walls of the buildings and stumbled around them, thoughtless of any possible signs of the fugitive.

The stars were out in myriads. The Milky Way was a spectacle to recall vividly the sentiment of the Nineteenth Psalm. The log-buildings of the clearing, every tree-trunk and bough in the woods beyond, the distant skyline of stump and hollow, all stood out sharply against the peculiar radiance of the snow. The night was as still as the spaces between the planets.

Like some wild creature of those winter woods the woman clumped and stumbled around the main shack, seeking the door.

Finding it, she stopped; the snowshoe slipped from beneath her arm; one numb hand groped for the log door-casing in support; the other fumbled for the revolver.

Tracks led into that cabin!

A paralysis of fright gripped Cora McBride. Something told her intuitively that she stood face to face at last with what she had traveled all this mountain wilderness to find. Yet with sinking heart it also came to her that if Hap Ruggam had made these tracks and were still within, she must face him in her exhausted condition and at once make that tortuous return trip to civilization. There would be no one to help her.

She realized in that moment that she was facing the primal. And she was not primal. She was a normal woman, weakened to near-prostration by the trek of the past twenty-four hours. Was it not better to turn away while there was time?

She stood debating thus, the eternal silence blanketing forest-world and clearing. But she was allowed to make no decision.

A living body sprang suddenly upon her. Before she could cry out, she was borne down precipitously from behind.

She tried to turn the revolver against the Thing upon her, but the gun was twisted from her raw, red fingers. The snow into which she had been precipitated blinded her. She smeared an arm across her eyes, but before clear sight was regained, talon fingers had gripped her shoulders. She was half lifted, half dragged through the doorway, and there she was dropped on the plank flooring. Her assailant, turning, made to close and bar the door.

When she could see clearly, she perceived a weak illumination in the cabin. On the rough bench-table, shaded by two slabs of bark, burned the stub of a tallow candle probably left by some hunting-party.

The windows were curtained with rotting blankets. Some rough furniture lay about; rusted cooking-utensils littered the tables, and at one end was a sheet-iron stove. The place had been equipped after a fashion by deer-hunters or mountain hikers, who brought additional furnishings to the place each year and left mouldy provisions and unconsumed firewood behind.

The man succeeded finally in closing the door. He turned upon her.

He was short and stocky. The stolen corduroy coat covered blacksmith's muscles now made doubly powerful by dementia. His hair was lifeless black and clipped close, prison-fashion. His low forehead hung over burning, mismated eyes. From her helplessness on the floor Cora McBride stared up at him.

He came closer.

"Get up!" he ordered. "Take that chair. And don't start no rough-house; whether you're a woman or not, I'll drill you!"

She groped to the indicated chair and raised herself, the single snowshoe still dragging from one foot. Again the man surveyed her. She saw his eyes and gave another inarticulate cry.

"Shut your mouth and keep it shut! You hear me?"

She obeyed.

The greenish light burned brighter in his mismated eyes, which gazed intently at the top of her head as though it held something unearthly.

"Take off your hat!" was his next command.

She pulled off the toque. Her hair fell in a mass on her snow-blotched shoulders. Her captor advanced upon her. He reached out and satisfied himself by touch that something was not there which he dreaded. In hypnotic fear she suffered that touch. It reassured him.

"Your hair now," he demanded; "it don't stand up, does it? No, o' course it don't. You ain't *him*; you're a woman. But if your hair comes up, I'll kill you—understand? If your hair comes up, *I'll kill you!*"

She understood. She understood only too well. She was not only housed with a murderer; she was housed with a maniac. She sensed, also, why he had come to this mountain shack so boldly. In his dementia he knew no better. And she was alone with him, unarmed now.

"I'll keep it down," she whispered, watching his face out of fear-distended eyes.

The wind blew one of the rotten blankets inward. Thereby she knew that the window-aperture on the south wall contained no sash. He must have removed it to provide means of escape in case he were attacked from the east door. He must have climbed out that window when she came around the shack; that is how he had felled her from behind.

He stepped backward now until he felt the edge of the bench touch his calves. Then he sank down, one arm stretched along the table's rim, the hand clutching the revolver.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Cora McB——" She stopped—she recalled in a flash the part her husband had played in his former capture and trial. "I'm Cora Allen," she corrected. Then she waited, her wits in chaos. She was fighting desperately to bring order out of that chaos.

"What you doin' up here?"

"I started for Millington, over the mountain. I lost my way."

"Why didn't you go by the road?"

"It's further."

"That's a lie! It ain't. And don't lie to me, or I'll kill you!"

"Who are you?" she heard herself asking. "And why are you acting this way with me?"

The man leaned suddenly forward.

"You mean to tell me you don't know?"

"A lumberjack, maybe, who's lost his way like myself?"

His expression changed abruptly.

"What you luggin' *this* for?" He indicated the revolver.

"For protection."

"From what?"

"Wild things."

"There ain't no wild things in these mountains this time o' year; they're snowed up, and you know it."

"I just felt safer to have it along."

"To protect you from men-folks, maybe?"

"There are no men in these mountains I'm afraid of!" She made the declaration with pathetic bravado.

His eyes narrowed.

"I think I better kill you," he decided. "You've seen me; you'll tell you seen me. Why shouldn't I kill you? You'd only tell."

"Why? What have I done to you?" she managed to stammer. "Why should you object to being seen?"

It was an unfortunate demand. He sprang up with a snarl. Pointing the revolver from his hip, he drew back the hammer.

"*Don't!*" she shrieked. "Are you crazy? Don't you know how to treat a woman—in distress?"

"Distress, *hell!* You know who I be. And I don't care whether you're a woman or not, I ain't goin' to be took—you understand?"

"Certainly I understand."

She said it in such a way that he eased the hammer back into place and lowered the gun. For the moment again she was safe. In response to her terrible need, some of her latent Yankee courage came now to aid her. "I don't see what you're making all this rumpus about," she told him in as indifferent a voice as she could command. "I don't see why you should want to kill a friend who might help you—if you're really in need of help."

"I want to get to Partridgeville," he muttered after a moment.

"You're not far from there. How long have you been on the road?"

"None of your business."

"Have you had any food?"

"No."

"If you'll put up that gun and let me get off this snowshoe and pack, I'll share with you some of the food I have."

"Never you mind what I do with this gun. Go ahead and fix your foot, and let's see what you got for grub." The man resumed his seat.

She twisted up her tangled hair, replaced her toque and untied the dangling snowshoe.

Outside a tree cracked in the frost. He started in hair-trigger fright. Creeping to the window, he peeped cautiously between casing and blanket. Convinced that it was nothing, he returned to his seat by the table.

"It's too bad we couldn't have a fire," suggested the woman then. "I'd make us something hot." The stove was there, rusted but still serviceable; available wood was scattered around. But the man shook his bullet head.

After a trying time unfastening the frosted knots of the ropes that had bound the knapsack upon her back, she emptied it on to the table. She kept her eye, however, on the gun. He had disposed of it by thrusting it into his belt. Plainly she would never recover it without a struggle. And she was in no condition for physical conflict.

"You're welcome to anything I have," she told him.

"Little you got to say about it! If you hadn't given it up, I'd took it away from you. So what's the difference?"

She shrugged her shoulders. She started around behind him but he sprang toward her.

"Don't try no monkey-shines with me!" he snarled. "You stay here in front where I can see you."

She obeyed, watching him make what poor meal he could from the contents of her bag.

She tried to reason out what the dénouement of the situation was to be. He would not send her away peacefully, for she knew he dared not risk the story she would tell regardless of any promises of secrecy she might give him. If he left

her bound in the cabin, she would freeze before help came—if it ever arrived.

No, either they were going to leave the place and journey forth together—the Lord only knew where or with what outcome—or the life of one of them was to end in this tragic place within the coming few minutes. For she realized she must use that gun with deadly effect if it were to come again into her possession.

The silence was broken only by the noises of his lips as he ate ravenously. Outside, not a thing stirred in that snow-bound world. Not a sound of civilization reached them. They were a man and woman in the primal, in civilization and yet a million miles from it.

"The candle's going out," she announced. "Is there another?"

"There'll be light enough for what I got to do," he growled.

Despite her effort to appear indifferent, her great fear showed plainly in her eyes.

"Are we going to stay here all night?" she asked with a pathetic attempt at lightness.

"That's my business."

"Don't you want me to help you?"

"You've helped me all you can with the gun and food."

"If you're going to Partridgeville, I'd go along and show you the way."

He leaped up.

"*Now I know you been lyin'!*" he bellowed. "You said you was headed for Millington. And you ain't at all. You're watchin' your chance to get the drop on me and have me took—that's what you're doin'!"

"Wait!" she pleaded desperately. "I *was* going to Millington. But I'd turn back and show you the way to Partridgeville to help you."

"What's it to you?" He had drawn the gun from his belt and now was fingering it nervously.

"You're lost up here in the mountains, aren't you?" she said. "I couldn't let you stay lost if it was possible for me to direct you on your way."

"You said you was lost yourself."

"I was lost—until I stumbled into this clearing. That gave me my location."

"Smart, ain't you? Damn' smart, but not too smart for me, you woman!" The flare flamed up again in his crooked eyes. "You know who I be, all right. You know what I'm aimin' to do. And you're stallin' for time till you can put one over. But you can't—see? I'll have this business done with. I'll end this business!"

She felt herself sinking to her knees. He advanced and gripped her left wrist. The crunch of his iron fingers sent an arrow of pain through her arm. It bore her down.

"For God's sake—*don't!*" she whispered hoarsely, overwhelmed with horror. For the cold, sharp nose of the revolver suddenly punched her neck.

"I ain't leavin' no traces behind. Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Never mind if I do——"

"Look!" she cried wildly. "Look, look, *look!*" And with her free hand she pointed behind him.

It was an old trick. There was nothing behind him. But in that instant of desperation instinct had guided her.

Involuntarily he turned.

With a scream of pain she twisted from his grasp and blotted out the candle.

A long, livid pencil of orange flame spurted from the gun-point. She sensed the powder-flare in her face. He had missed.

She scrambled for shelter beneath the table. The cabin was now in inky blackness. Across that black four more threads of scarlet light were laced. The man stumbled about seeking her, cursing with blood-curdling blasphemy.

Suddenly he tripped and went sprawling. The gun clattered from his bruised fingers; it struck the woman's knee.

Swiftly her hand closed upon it. The hot barrel burned her palm.

She was on her feet in an instant. Her left hand fumbled in her blouse, and she found what had been there all along—the flash-lamp.

With her back against the door, she pulled it forth. With the gun thrust forward for action she pressed the button.

"I've got the gun—*get up!*" she ordered. "Don't come too near me or I'll shoot. Back up against that wall."

The bull's-eye of radiance blinded him. When his eyes

became accustomed to the light, he saw its reflection on the barrel of the revolver. He obeyed.

"Put up your hands. Put 'em up *high*!"

"Suppose I won't?"

"I'll kill you."

"What'll you gain by that?"

"Five thousand dollars."

"Then you know who I be?"

"Yes."

"And was aimin' to take me in?"

"Yes."

"How you goin' to do that if I won't go?"

"You're goin' to find out."

"You won't get no money shootin' me."

"Yes, I will—just as much—dead as alive."

With his hands raised a little way above the level of his shoulders, he stood rigidly at bay in the circle of light.

"Well," he croaked at last, "go ahead and shoot. I ain't aimin' to be took—not by no woman. Shoot, damn you, and have it done with. I'm waitin'!"

"Keep up those hands!"

"I won't!" He lowered them defiantly. "I w-wanted to m-make Partridgeville and see the old lady. She'd 'a' helped me. But anything's better'n goin' back to that hell where I been the last two years. Go on! Why don't you shoot?"

"You wanted to make Partridgeville and see—*who*?"

"My mother—and my wife."

"Have you got a mother? Have you got a—wife?"

"Yes, and three kids. Why don't you shoot?"

It seemed an eon that they stood so. The McBride woman was trying to find the nerve to fire. She could not. In that instant she made a discovery that many luckless souls make too late: *to kill a man* is easy to talk about, easy to write about. But to stand deliberately face to face with a fellow-human—alive, pulsing, breathing, fearing, hoping, loving, living,—point a weapon at him that would take his life, blot him from the earth, negate twenty or thirty years of childhood, youth, maturity, and make of him in an instant—nothing!—that is quite another matter.

He was helpless before her now. Perhaps the expression on his face had something to do with the sudden revulsion that

halted her finger. Facing certain death, some of the evil in those crooked eyes seemed to die out, and the terrible personality of the man to fade. Regardless of her danger, regardless of what he would have done to her if luck had not turned the tables, Cora McBride saw before her only a lone man with all society's hand against him, realizing he had played a bad game to the limit and lost, two big tears creeping down his unshaved face, waiting for the end.

"Three children!" she whispered faintly.

"Yes."

"You're going back to see them?"

"Yes, and my mother. Mother'd help me get to Canada—somehow."

Cora McBride had forgotten all about the five thousand dollars. She was stunned by the announcement that this man had relatives—a mother, a wife, *three* babies. The human factor had not before occurred to her. Murderers! They have no license to let their eyes well with tears, to have wives and babies, to possess mothers who will help them get to Canada regardless of what their earthly indiscretions may have been.

At this revelation the gun-point wavered. The sight of those tears on his face sapped her will-power even as a wound in her breast might have drained her life-blood.

Her great moment had been given her. She was letting it slip away. She had her reward in her hand for the mere pulling of a trigger and no incrimination for the result. For a bit of human sentiment she was bungling the situation unpardonably, fatally.

Why did she not shoot? Because she was a woman. Because it is the God-given purpose of womanhood to give life, not take it.

The gun sank, sank—down out of the light, down out of sight.

And the next instant he was upon her.

The flash-lamp was knocked from her hand and blinked out. It struck the stove and she heard the tinkle of the broken lens. The woman's hand caught at the sacking before the window at her left shoulder. Gripping it wildly to save herself from that onslaught, she tore it away. For the second time the revolver was twisted from her raw fingers.

The man reared upward, over her.

"Where are you?" he roared again and again. "I'll show you! Lemme at you!"

Outside the great yellow moon of early winter, arising late, was coming up over the silhouetted line of purple mountains to the eastward. It illumined the cabin with a faint radiance, disclosing the woman crouching beneath the table.

The man saw her, pointed his weapon point-blank at her face and fired.

To Cora McBride, prostrate there in her terror, the impact of the bullet felt like the blow of a stick upon her cheek-bone rocking her head. Her cheek felt warmly numb. She pressed a quick hand involuntarily against it, and drew it away sticky with blood.

Click! Click! Click!

Three times the revolver mechanism was worked to accomplish her destruction. But there was no further report. The cylinder was empty.

"Oh, God!" the woman moaned. "I fed you and offered to help you. I refused to shoot you because of your mother—your wife—your babies. And yet you——"

"Where's your cartridges?" he cried wildly. "You got more; gimme that belt!"

She felt his touch upon her. His crazy fingers tried to unbutton the clasp of the belt and holster. But he could secure neither while she fought him. He pinioned her at length with his knee. His fingers secured a fistful of the cylinders from her girdle, and he opened the chamber of the revolver.

She realized the end was but a matter of moments. Nothing but a miracle could save her now.

Convulsively she groped about for something with which to strike. Nothing lay within reach of her bleeding fingers, however, but a little piece of dried sapling. She tried to struggle loose, but the lunatic held her mercilessly. He continued the mechanical loading of the revolver.

The semi-darkness of the hut, the outline of the moon afar through the uncurtained window—these swam before her. . . . Suddenly her eyes riveted on that curtainless window and she uttered a terrifying cry.

Ruggam turned.

Outlined in the window aperture against the low-hung moon *Martin Wiley, the murdered deputy, was staring into the cabin!*

From the fugitive's throat came a gurgle. Some of the cartridges he held spilled to the flooring. Above her his figure became rigid. There was no mistaking the identity of the apparition. They saw the man's hatless head and some of his neck. They saw his dark pompadour and the outline of his skull. As that horrible silhouette remained there, Wiley's pompadour lifted slightly as it had done in life.

The cry in the convict's throat broke forth into words.

"Mart Wiley!" he cried, "Mart Wiley! *Mart—Wiley!*"

Clear, sharp, distinct was the shape of that never-to-be-forgotten pompadour against the disk of the winter moon. His features could not be discerned, for the source of light was behind him, but the silhouette was sufficient. It was Martin Wiley; he was alive. His head and his wirelike hair were moving—rising, falling.

Ruggam, his eyes riveted upon the phantom, recoiled mechanically to the western wall. He finished loading the revolver by the sense of touch. Then:

Spurt after spurt of fire lanced the darkness, directed at the Thing in the window. While the air of the hut reeked with the acrid smoke, the echo of the volley sounded through the silent forest-world miles away.

But the silhouette in the window remained.

Once or twice it moved slightly as though in surprise; that was all. The pompadour rose in bellicose retaliation—the gesture that had always ensued when Wiley was angered or excited. But to bullets fired from an earthly gun the silhouette of the murdered deputy's ghost, arisen in these winter woods to prevent another slaughter, was impervious.

Ruggam saw; he shrieked. He broke the gun and spilled out the empty shells. He fumbled in more cartridges, locked the barrel and fired again and again, until once more it was empty.

Still the apparition remained.

The man in his dementia hurled the weapon; it struck the sash and caromed off, hitting the stove. Then Hap Ruggam collapsed upon the floor.

The woman sprang up. She found the rope thongs which

had bound her pack to her shoulders. With steel-taut nerves, she rolled the insensible Ruggam over.

She tied his hands; she tied his ankles. With her last bit of rope she connected the two bindings tightly behind him so that if he recovered, he would be at her mercy. Her task accomplished, on her knees beside his prone figure, she thought to glance up at the window.

Wiley's ghost had disappeared.

Sheriff Crumpett and his party broke into the Lyons clearing within an hour. They had arrived in answer to five successive shots given a few moments apart, the signal agreed upon. The mystery to them, however, was that those five shots had been fired by some one not of their party.

The sheriff and his men found the McBride woman, her clothing half torn from her body, her features powder-marked and blood-stained; but she was game to the last, woman-fashion weeping only now that all was over. They found, too, the man they had combed the country to find—struggling fruitlessly in his bonds, her prisoner.

And they likewise found the miracle.

On the snow outside under the window they came upon a black porcupine about the size of a man's head which, scenting food within the cabin, had climbed to the sill, and after the habit of these little animals whose number is legion all over the Green Mountains, had required fifteen bullets pumped into its carcass before it would release its hold.

Even in death its quills were raised in uncanny duplication of Mart Wiley's pompadour.

A MATTER OF LOYALTY

BY LAWRENCE PERRY

From The Red Book

STANDING in the bow of the launch, Dr. Nicholls, coach of the Baliol crew, leaned upon his megaphone, his eyes fixed upon two eight-oared crews resting upon their oars a hundred feet away. From his hand dangled a stop-watch. The two crews had just completed a four-mile race against the watch.

A grim light came into the deeply set gray eyes of Jim Deacon as the coach put the watch into his pocket. Deacon was the stroke of the second varsity, an outfit which in aquatics bears the same relation to a university eight as the scrub team does to a varsity football eleven. But in the race just completed the second varsity had been much of a factor—surprisingly, dishearteningly so. Nip and tuck it had been, the varsity straining to drop the rival boat astern, but unable to do so. At the finish not a quarter of a length, not fifteen feet, had separated the two prows; a poor showing for the varsity to have made with the great rowing classic of the season coming on apace—a poor showing, that is, assuming the time consumed in the four-mile trip was not especially low.

Only the coach could really know whether the time was satisfactory or not. But Jim Deacon suspected that it was poor, his idea being based upon knowledge he had concerning the capabilities of his own crew; in other words, he knew it was only an average second varsity outfit. The coach knew it too. That was the reason his jaws were set, his eyes vacant. At length he shook his head.

“Not good, boys—not good.” His voice was gentle, though usually he was a rip-roaring mentor. “Varsity, you weren’t rowing. That’s the answer—not rowing together. What’s the matter, eh?”

"I thought, Dr. Nicholls, that the rhythm was very good——"

The coach interrupted Rollins, the captain, with a gesture.

"Oh, rhythm! Yes, you row prettily enough. You look well. I should hope so, at this time of the season. But you're not shoving the boat fast; you don't pick up and get her moving. You're leaking power somewhere; as a matter of fact, I suspect you're not putting the power in. I know you're not. Ashburton, didn't that lowering of your seat fix you? Well, then,"—as the young man nodded affirmatively—"how about your stretcher, Innis? Does it suit you now?"

As Innis nodded, signifying that it did, Deacon saw the coach's eyes turn to Doane, who sat at stroke of the varsity.

"Now," muttered the stroke of the second varsity, his eyes gleaming, "we'll hear something."

"Doane, is there anything the trouble with you? You're feeling well, aren't you?"

"Yes sir. Sure!" The boy flushed. Tall, straight, handsome he sat in the boat, fingering the oar-handle nervously. In appearance he was the ideal oarsman. And yet——

Deacon, watching the coach, could almost see his mind working. Now the time had come, the issue clearly defined. Another stroke must be tried and found not wanting, else the annual eight-oared rowing classic between those ancient universities Baliol and Shelburne would be decided before it was rowed.

Deacon flushed as the coach's glittering eyeglasses turned toward him. It was the big moment of the senior's four years at college. Four years! And six months of each of those years a galley-slave—on the machines in the rowing-room of the gymnasium, on the ice-infested river with the cutting winds of March sweeping free; then the more genial months with the voice of coach or assistant coach lashing him. Four years of dogged, unremitting toil with never the reward of a varsity seat, and now with the great regatta less than a week away, the big moment, the crown of all he had done.

Words seemed on the verge of the coach's lips. Deacon's eyes strained upon them as he sat stiffly in his seat. But no words came; the coach turned away.

"All right," he said spiritlessly. "Paddle back to the float.

The coxswains barked their orders; sixteen oars rattled in their locks; the glistening shells moved slowly homeward.

Tingling from his plunge in the river, Jim Deacon walked up the bluff from the boathouse to the group of cottages which constituted Baliol's rowing-quarters. Some of the freshman crew were playing indoor baseball on the lawn under the gnarled trees, and their shouts and laughter echoed over the river. Deacon stood watching them. His face was of the roughhewn type; in his two upper-class years his heavy frame had taken on a vast amount of brawn and muscle. Now his neck was meet for his head and for his chest and shoulders; long, slightly bowed limbs filled out a picture of perfect physique.

No one had known him really well in college. He was working his way through. Besides, he was a student in one of the highly scientific engineering courses which demanded a great deal of steady application. With no great aptitude for football—he was a bit slow-footed—with little time or inclination for social activities, he had concentrated upon rowing, not only as a diversion from his arduous studies, an ordered outlet for physical energy, but with the idea of going out into the world with that hallmark of a Baliol varsity oar which he had heard and believed was likely to stand him in stead in life. Baliol alumni, which include so many men of wealth and power, had a habit of not overlooking young graduates who have brought fame to their alma mater.

As Deacon stood watching the freshmen at play, Dick Rollins, the crew captain, came up.

"They sent down the time-trial results from the Shelburne quarters, Deacon."

Never in his life had one of the great men of the university spoken that many words, or half as many, to Jim Deacon, who stared at the speaker.

"The time—oh, yes; I see."

"They did twenty minutes, thirty seconds."

Deacon whistled.

"Well," he said at length, "you didn't get the boat moving much to-day." He wanted to say more, but could think of nothing. Words came rather hard with him.

"You nearly lugged the second shell ahead of us to-day, hang you."

"No use letting a patient die because he doesn't know he's sick."

Rollins grimaced.

"Yes, we were sick. Doc Nicholls knows a sick crew when he sees one. He—he thinks you're the needed tonic, Deacon."

"Eh?"

"He told me you were to sit in at stroke in Junior Doane's place to-morrow. I'd been pulling for the change the past few days. Now he sees it."

"You were pulling—— But you're Doane's roommate."

"Yes, it's tough. But Baliol first, you know."

Deacon stared at the man. He wanted to say something but couldn't. The captain smiled.

"Look here, Deacon; let's walk over toward the railroad a bit. I want to talk to you." Linking his arm through Deacon's, he set out through the yard toward the quaint old road with its little cluster of farm cottages and rolling stone-walled meadow-land bathed in the light of the setting sun.

"Jim, old boy, you're a queer sort of a chap, and—and—the fact is, the situation will be a bit ticklish. You know what it means for a fellow to be thrown out of his seat just before a race upon which he has been counting heart and soul."

"I don't know. I can imagine."

"You see, it's Doane. You know about his father——"

"I know all about his father," was the reply.

"Eh?" Rollins stared at him, then smiled. "I suppose every rowing man at Baliol does. But you don't know as much as I do. On the quiet, he's the man who gave us the new boathouse last year. He's our best spender. He was an old varsity oar himself."

"Sure, I know."

"That's the reason the situation is delicate. Frankly, Jim, Doc Nicholls and the rest of us would have liked to see Junior Doane come through. I think you get what I mean. He's a senior; he's my best friend."

"He stroked the boat last year."

"Yes, and Shelburne beat us. Naturally he wants to get back at that crowd."

"But he can't—not if he strokes the boat, Rollins. If you don't know it, I'm telling you. If I thought different, I'd say so." Deacon abruptly paused after so long a speech.

"You don't have to tell me. I know it. We're not throwing a race to Shelburne simply to please old Cephas Doane, naturally. I know what you've got, Jim. So does Dr. Nicholls. You'll be in the varsity to-morrow. But here's the point of what I've been trying to say; Junior Doane hasn't been very decent to you——"

"Oh, he's been all right."

"Yes, I know. But he's a funny fellow; not a bit of a snob—I don't mean that, but—but——"

"You mean he hasn't paid much attention to me." Deacon smiled grimly. "Well, that's all right. As a matter of fact, I never really have got to know him. Still, I haven't got to know many of the fellows. Too busy. You haven't paid much attention to me, either; but I like you."

Rollins, whose father was a multimillionaire with family roots going deep among the rocks of Manhattan Island, laughed.

"Bully for you! You won't mind my saying so, Jim, but I had it in my mind to ask you to be a bit inconsequential—especially when Doane was around—about your taking his place. But I guess it isn't necessary."

"No,"—Deacon's voice was short—"it isn't."

"Junior Doane, of course, will be hard hit. He'll be game. He'll try to win back his seat. And he may; I warn you."

"If he can win it back, I want him to."

"Good enough!" The captain started to walk away, then turned back with sudden interest. "By the way, Jim, I was looking through the college catalogue this morning. You and Doane both come from Philadelphia, don't you?"

"Yes."

"I asked Doane if he knew you there. Apparently not."

"No, he didn't." Deacon paused as though deliberating. Suddenly he spoke. "I knew of him, though. You see, my father works in the bank of which Mr. Doane is president."

"Oh!" Rollins blinked. "I see."

Deacon stepped forward, placing his hand upon the captain's arm.

"I don't know why I told you that. It isn't important at

all. Don't say anything to Doane, will you? Not that I care. It—it just isn't important."

"No. I get you, Jim. It isn't important." He flung an arm over the young man's shoulder. "Let's go back to dinner. That rotten time-row has given me an appetite."

There was that quiet in the Baliol dining room that evening which one might expect to find after an unsatisfactory time-trial. Nations might be falling, cities burning, important men dying; to these boys such events would be as nothing in the face of the fact that the crew of a traditional rival was to be met within the week—and that they were not proving themselves equipped for the meeting.

"If any of you fellows wish to motor down to the Groton Hotel on the Point for an hour or two, you may go," said the coach, pushing back his chair. He had begun to fear that his charges might be coming to too fine a point of condition and had decided that the relaxation of a bit of dancing might do no harm.

"Yeea!" In an instant that subdued dining apartment was tumultuous with vocal outcry, drawing to the doorway a crowd of curious freshmen who were finishing dinner in their room.

"All right!" Dr. Nicholls grinned. "I gather all you varsity and second varsity men want to go. I'll have the big launch ready at eight. And—oh, Dick Rollins, don't forget; that boat leaves the hotel dock at ten-forty-five precisely."

"Got you sir. Come on, fellows. Look out, you freshmen." With a yell and a dive the oarsmen went through the doors.

Deacon followed at a more leisurely gait with that faint gleam of amusement in his eyes which was so characteristic. His first impulse was not to go, but upon second thought he decided that he would. Jane Bostwick was stopping at the Groton. Her father was a successful promoter and very close to Cephas Doane, Sr., whose bank stood back of most of his operations. Deacon had known her rather well in the days when her father was not a successful promoter. In fact, the two had been neighbours as boy and girl, had played together in front of a row of prim brick houses. He had not seen her in recent years until the previous afternoon, when as he was

walking along the country road, she had pulled up in her roadster.

"Don't pretend you don't remember me, Jim Deacon," she had laughed as the boy had stared at the stunning young woman.

Jim remembered her, all right. They talked as though so many significant years had not elapsed. She was greatly interested, exceedingly gracious.

"Do you know," she said, "it never occurred to me that Deacon, the Baliol rowing man, was none other than Jim Deacon. Silly of me, wasn't it? But then I didn't even know you were in Baliol. I'm perfectly crazy about the crew, you know. And Mother, I think, is a worse fan than I am. You know Junior Doane, of course."

"Oh, yes—that is, I—why, yes, I know him."

"Yes." She smiled down upon him. "If you're ever down to the Groton, do drop in. Mother would love to see you. She often speaks of your mother." With a wave of her hand she had sped on her way.

Curiously, that evening he had heard Doane talking to her over the telephone, and there was a great deal in his manner of speaking that indicated something more than mere acquaintance.

But Deacon did not see Jane Bostwick at the hotel—not to speak to, at least. He was not a good dancer and held aloof when those of his fellows who were not acquainted with guests were introduced around. Finding a wicker settee among some palms at one side of the orchestra, Deacon sat drinking in the scene.

It was not until the hour set for the return had almost arrived that Deacon saw Jane Bostwick, and then his attention was directed to her by her appearance with Junior Doane in one of the open French windows at his right. Evidently the two had spent the evening in the sequestered darkness of the veranda. No pair in the room filled the eye so gratefully; the girl, tall, blonde, striking in a pale blue evening gown; the man, broad-shouldered, trim-waisted, with the handsome high-held head of a patrician.

A wave of something akin to bitterness passed over Deacon—bitterness having nothing to do with self. For the boy was ruggedly independent. He believed in himself; knew

what he was going to do in the world. He was thinking of his father, and of the fathers of that young man and girl before him. His father was painstaking, honourable, considerate—a nobleman every inch of him; a man who deserved everything that the world had to give, a man who had everything save the quality of acquisition. And Doane's father? And Jane Bostwick's father?

Of the elder Doane he knew by hearsay—a proud, intolerant wholly worldly man whose passions, aside from finance, were his son and Baliol aquatics. And Jane Bostwick's father he had known as a boy—a soft-footed, sly-faced velvety sort of a man noted for converting back lots into oil-fields and ash-dumps into mines yielding precious metals. Jim Deacon was not so old that he had come to philosophy concerning the way of the world.

But so far as his immediate world was concerned, Junior Doane was going out of the varsity boat in the morning—and he, Jim Deacon, was going to sit in his place.

It came the next morning. When the oarsmen went down to the boathouse to dress for their morning row, the arrangement of the various crews posted on the bulletin-board gave Deacon the seat at stroke in the varsity boat; Junior Doane's name appeared at stroke in the second varsity list.

There had been rumours of some sort of a shift, but no one seemed to have considered the probability of Doane's losing his seat—Doane least of all. For a moment the boy stood rigid, looking up at the bulletin-board. Then suddenly he laughed.

"All right, Garry," he said, turning to the captain of the second varsity. "Come on; we'll show 'em what a rudder looks like."

But it was not to be. In three consecutive dashes of a mile each, the varsity boat moved with such speed as it had not shown all season. There was life in the boat. Deacon, rowing in perfect form, passed the stroke up forward with a kick and a bite, handling his oar with a precision that made the eye of the coach glisten. And when the nervous little coxswain called for a rousing ten strokes, the shell seemed fairly to lift out of the water.

In the last mile dash Dr. Nicholls surreptitiously took his stop-watch from his pocket and timed the sprint. When he

replaced the timepiece, the lines of care which had seamed his face for the past few days vanished.

"All right, boys. Paddle in. Day after to-morrow we'll hold the final time-trial. Deacon, be careful; occasionally you clip your stroke at the finish."

But Deacon didn't mind the admonition. He knew the coach's policy of not letting a man think he was too good.

"You certainly bucked up that crew to-day, Deacon." Jim Deacon, who had been lying at full length on the turf at the top of the bluff watching the shadows creep over the purpling waters of the river, looked up to see Doane standing over him. His first emotion was one of triumph. Doane, the son of Cephas Doane, his father's employer, had definitely noticed him at last. Then the dominant emotion came—one of sympathy.

"Well, the second crew moved better too."

"Oh, I worked like a dog." Doane laughed. "Of course you know I'm going to get my place back, if I can."

"Of course." Deacon plucked a blade of grass and placed it in his mouth. There was rather a constrained silence for a moment.

"I didn't know you came from my city, Deacon. I—Jane Bostwick told me about you last night."

"I see. I used to know her." Inwardly Deacon cursed his natural inability to converse easily, partly fearing that Doane would mistake his reticence for embarrassment in his presence, or on the other hand set him down as churlish and ill bred.

For his part Doane seemed a bit ill at ease.

"I didn't know, of course, anything Jane told me. If I had, of course, I'd have looked you up more at the college."

"We're both busy there in our different ways."

Doane stood awkwardly for a moment and then walked away, not knowing that however he may have felt about the conversation, he had at least increased his stature in the mind of Jim Deacon.

Next day on the river Junior Doane's desperation at the outset brought upon his head the criticism of the coach.

"Doane! Doane! You're rushing your slide. Finish out your stroke, for heaven's sake."

Deacon, watching the oarsman's face, saw it grow rigid, saw

his mouth set. Well he knew the little tragedy through which Doane was living.

Doane did better after that. The second boat gave the varsity some sharp brushes while the coxswains barked and the coach shouted staccato objurgation and comment through his megaphone, and the rival oarsmen swung backward and forward in the expenditure of ultimate power and drive.

But Jim Deacon was the man for varsity stroke. There was not the least doubt about that. The coach could see it; the varsity could feel it; but of them all Deacon alone knew why. He knew that Doane was practically as strong an oar as he was, certainly as finished. And Doane's experience was greater. The difficulty as Deacon grasped it was that the boy had not employed all the material of his experience. The coxswain, Seagraves, was a snappy little chap, with an excellent opinion of his head. But Deacon had doubts as to his racing sense. He could shoot ginger into his men, could lash them along with a fine rhythm, but in negotiating a hard-fought race he had his shortcomings. At least so Deacon had decided in the brushes against the varsity shell when he was stroking the second varsity.

Deacon thanked no coxswain to tell him how to row a race, when to sprint, when to dog along at a steady, swinging thirty; nor did he require advice on the pacing and general condition of a rival crew. As he swung forward for the catch, his practice was to turn his head slightly to one side, chin along the shoulder, thus gaining through the tail of his eye a glimpse of any boat that happened to be abeam, slightly ahead or slightly astern. This glance told him everything he wished to know. The coach did not know the reason for this peculiarity in Deacon's style, but since it did not affect his rowing, he very wisely said nothing. To his mind the varsity boat had at last begun to arrive, and this was no time for minor points.

Two days before the Shelburne race the Baliol varsity in its final time-trial came within ten seconds of equalling the lowest downstream trial-record ever established—a record made by a Shelburne eight of the early eighties. There was no doubt in the mind of any one about the Baliol crew quarters that Deacon would be the man to set the pace for his university in the supreme test swiftly approaching.

News of Baliol's improved form began to be disseminated

in the daily press by qualified observers of rowing form who were beginning to flock to the scene of the regatta from New York, Philadelphia, and various New England cities. Dr. Nicholls was reticent, but no one could say that his demeanour was marked by gloom. Perhaps his optimism would have been more marked had the information he possessed concerning Shelburne been less disturbing. As a fact there was every indication that the rival university would be represented by one of the best crews in her history—which was to say a very great deal. In truth, Baliol rowing enthusiasts had not seen their shell cross the line ahead of a Shelburne varsity boat in three consecutive years, a depressing state of affairs which in the present season had filled every Baliol rowing man with grim determination and the graduates with alternate hope and despair.

"Jim," said the coach, drawing Deacon from the float upon which he had been standing, watching the antics of a crew of former Baliol oarsmen who had come from far and wide to row the mile race of "Gentlemen's Eights" which annually marked the afternoon preceding the classic regatta day, "Jim, you're not worried at all, are you? You're such a quiet sort of a chap, I can't seem to get you."

Deacon smiled faintly.

"No, I'm not worried—not a bit, sir. I mean I'm going to do my best, and if that's good enough, why—well, we win."

"I want you to do more than your best to-morrow, Jim. It's got to be a super-effort. You're up against a great Shelburne crew, the greatest I ever saw—that means twelve years back. I wouldn't talk to every man this way, but I think you're a stroke who can stand responsibility. I think you're a man who can work the better when he knows the size of his job. It's a big one, boy—the biggest I've ever tackled."

"Yes, sir."

The coach studied him a minute.

"How do you feel about beating Shelburne? What I mean," he went on as the oarsman regarded him, puzzled, "is, would it break your heart to lose? Is the thought of being beaten so serious that you can't—that you won't consider it?"

"No sir, I won't consider it. I don't go into anything without wanting to come out ahead. I've worked three years to

get into the varsity. I realize the position you've given me will help me, make me stand out after graduation, mean almost as much as my diploma—provided we can win."

"What about Baliol? Do you think of the college, too, and what a victory will mean to her? What defeat will mean?"

"Oh," Deacon shrugged; "of course," he went on a bit carelessly, "we want to see Baliol on top as often——" He stopped, then broke into a chuckle as the stroke of the gentlemen's eight suddenly produced from the folds of his sweater a bottle from which he drank with dramatic unction while his fellow-oarsmen clamoured to share the libation and the coxswain abused them all roundly.

The eyes of the coach never left the young man's face. But he said nothing while Deacon took his fill of enjoyment of the jovial scene, apparently forgetting the sentence which he had broken in the middle.

But that evening something of the coach's meaning came to Deacon as he sat on a rustic bench watching the colours fade from one of those sunset skies which live ever in the hearts of rowing men who have ever spent a hallowed June on the heights of that broad placid stream. The Baliol graduates had lost their race against the gentlemen of Shelburne, having rowed just a bit worse than their rivals. And now the two crews were celebrating their revival of the ways of youth with a dinner provided by the defeated eight. Their laughter and their songs went out through the twilight and were lost in the recesses of the river. One song with a haunting melody caught Deacon's attention; he listened to get the words.

Then raise the rosy goblet high,
The senior's chalice and belie
The tongues that trouble and defile,
For we have yet a little while
To linger, you and youth and I,
In college days.

A group of oarsmen down on the lawn caught up the song and sent it winging through the twilight, soberly, impressively, with ever-surging harmony. College days! For a moment a dim light burned in the back of his mind. It went out suddenly. Jim Deacon shrugged and thought of the morrow's race.

It was good to know he was going to be a part of it. He could feel the gathering of enthusiasm, exhilaration in the atmosphere—pent-up emotion which on the morrow would burst like a thunderclap. In the quaint city five miles down the river hotels were filling with the vanguard of the boat-race throng—boys fresh from the poetry of Commencement; their older brothers, their fathers, their grandfathers, living again the thrill of youth and the things thereof. And mothers and sisters and sweethearts! Deacon's nerves tingled pleasantly in response to the glamour of the hour.

"Oh, Jim Deacon!"

"Hello!" Deacon turned his face toward the building whence the voice came.

"Somebody wants to see you on the road by the bridge over the railroad."

"See me? All right."

Filled with wonder, Deacon walked leisurely out of the yard and then reaching the road, followed in the wake of an urchin of the neighbourhood who had brought the summons, and could tell Deacon only that it was some one in an automobile.

It was, in fact, Jane Bostwick.

"Jump up here in the car, won't you, Jim?" Her voice was somewhat tense. "No, I'm not going to drive," she added as Deacon hesitated. "We can talk better.

"Have you heard from your father lately?" she asked as the young man sprang into the seat at her side.

He started.

"No, not in a week. Why, is there anything the matter with him?"

"Of course not." She touched him lightly upon the arm. "You knew that Mr. Bell, cashier of the National Penn Bank, had died?"

"No. Is that so! That's too bad." Then suddenly Deacon sat erect. "By George! Father is one of the assistant cashiers there. I wonder if he'll be promoted." He turned upon the girl. "Is that what you wanted to tell me?"

She waited a bit before replying.

"No—not exactly that."

"Not exactly—— What do you mean?"

"Do you know how keen Mr. Doane, I mean Junior's father

is on rowing? Well,"—as Deacon nodded,—“have you thought how he might feel toward the father of the man who is going to sit in his son's seat in the race to-morrow? Would it make him keen to put that father in Mr. Bell's place?”

Deacon's exclamation was sharp.

“Who asked you to put that thought in my mind?”

“Ah!” Her hand went out, lying upon his arm. “I was afraid you were going to take it that way. Mother was talking this afternoon. I thought you should know. As for Junior Doane, I'm frank to admit I'm awfully keen about him. But that isn't why I came here. I remember how close you and your father used to be. I—I thought perhaps you'd thank me, if—if——”

“What you mean is that because I have beaten Doane out for stroke, his father may be sore and not promote my father at the bank.”

“There's no ‘may’ about it. Mr. Doane will be sore. He'll be sore at Junior, of course. But he'll be sore secretly at you, and where there is a question of choice of cashier between *your* father and another man—even though the other man has not been so long in the bank—how do you think his mind will work; I mean, if you lose? Of course, if you can win, then I am sure everything will be all right. You must——”

“If I can win! What difference would that——” He stopped suddenly. “I've caught what you mean.” He laughed bitterly. “Parental jealousy. All right! All right!”

“Jim, I don't want you——”

“Don't bother. I've heard all I can stand, Jane. Thank you.” He lurched out of the car and hurried away.

She called him. No answer. Waiting a moment, the girl sighed, touched the self-starter and drove away.

Deacon had no idea of any lapse of time between the departure of the car and himself in his cot prepared for sleep—with, however, no idea that sleep would come. His mood was pitiable. His mind was a mass of whirling thoughts in the midst of which he could recognize pictures of his boyhood, a little boy doing many things—with a hand always tucked within the fingers of a great big man who knew everything, who could do everything, who could always explain all the mysteries of the big, strange, booming world. There were many such pictures, pictures not only relating to boyhood,

but to his own struggle at Baliol, to the placid little home in Philadelphia and all that it had meant, all that it still meant, to his father, to his mother, to him, Any act of his that would bring sorrow or dismay or the burden of defeated hope to that home!

But on the other hand, the morrow was to bring him the crown of toilsome years, was to make his name one to conjure with wherever Baliol was loved or known. He knew what the varsity *cachet* would do for his prospects in the world. And after all, he had his own life to live, had he not? Would not the selfish, or rather the rigorous, settlement of this problem, be for the best in the end, since his making good would simply be making good for his father and his mother? But how about his father's chance for making good on his own account?

A comrade in the cot adjoining heard a groan.

"Eh! Are you sick, Deacon? Are you all right?"

"Sure—dreaming," came the muffled reply.

There was something unreal to Deacon about the morning. The sunlight was filled with sinister glow; the voices of the rowing men were strange; the whole environment seemed to have changed. It was difficult for Jim Deacon to look upon the bronzed faces of the fellows about the breakfast table, upon the coach with his stiff moustache and glittering eye-glasses—difficult to look upon them and realize that within a few hours his name would be anathema to them, that forever where loyal men of Baliol gather he would be an outcast, a pariah.

That was what he would be—an outcast. For he had come to his decision: Just what he would do he did not know. He did not know that he would not stroke the Baliol varsity. Out of all the welter of thought and travail had been resolved one dominant idea. His father came first: there was no evading it. With all the consequences that would follow the execution of his decision he was familiar. He had come now to know what Baliol meant to him as a place not only of education, but a place to be loved, honoured, revered. He knew what his future might be. But—his father came first. Arising from the breakfast-table, he spoke to but one man, Junior Doane.

"Doane," he said, drawing him to one side, "you will row at stroke this afternoon."

The man stared at him. "Are you crazy, Deacon?"

"No, not crazy. I'm not feeling well; that's all."

"But look here, Deacon—you want to see the coach. You're off your head or something. Wait here, just a minute." As Doane hurried away in search of Dr. Nicholls, Deacon turned blindly through the yard and so out to the main road leading to a picturesque little river city about nine miles up the stream.

June was at her loveliest in this lovable country with its walled fields, its serene uplands and glowing pastures, its lush river meadows and wayside flowers. But of all this Deacon marked nothing as with head down he tramped along with swift, dogged stride. Up the river three or four miles farther on was the little city of which he had so often heard but never seen, the little city of Norton, so like certain English river-cities according to a veteran Oxford oarsman who had visited the Baliol quarters the previous season. Deacon had an interest in strange places; he had an eye for the picturesque and the colourful. He would wander about the place, filling his mind with impressions. He had always wanted to go to Norton; it had seemed like a dream city to him.

He was in fact striding along in the middle of the road when the horn of a motorcar coming close behind startled him. As he turned, the vehicle sped up to his side and then stopped with a grinding of brakes.

Dr. Nicholls, the coach, rose to his full height in the roadster and glared down at Deacon, while Junior Doane, who had been driving, stared fixedly over the wheel. The coach's voice was merely a series of profane roars. He had ample lungs, and the things he said seemed to echo far and wide. His stentorian anger afforded so material a contrast to the placid environment that Deacon stood dazed under the vocal avalanche, hearing but a blur of oburgation.

"Eh?" He paused as Junior Doane placed an admonishing hand upon his arm.

"I beg your pardon, Doctor; but I don't think that is the right way. May I say something to Deacon?"

The coach, out of breath, nodded and gestured, sinking into his seat.

"Look here, Jim Deacon, we've come to take you back. You can't buck out the race this way, you know. It isn't done. Now, wait a minute!" he cried sharply as the boy in the road made to speak. "I know why you ran away. Jane Bostwick called me up and told me everything. She hadn't realized quite what she was doing——"

"She—she bungled everything."

"Bungled! What do you mean, Dr. Nicholls?"

"Nothing—nothing! You young idiot, don't you realize you're trying to kill yourself for life? Jump into the car."

"I'm not going to row." Deacon's eyes smoldered upon the two.

Studying him a moment, Dr. Nicholls suddenly grasped the seriousness of Deacon's mood. He leaped from the car and walked up to him, placing a hand upon his shoulder.

"Look here, my boy: You've let a false ideal run away with you. Do you realize that some twenty-five thousand people throughout this country are having their interests tossed away by you? You represent them. They didn't ask you to. You came out for the crew and worked until you won a place for yourself, a place no one but you can fill. There are men, there are families on this riverside to-day, who have traveled from San Francisco, from all parts of the country, to see Baliol at her best. There are thousands who have the right to ask us that Shelburne is not permitted to win this afternoon. Do you realize your respons——"

Deacon raised his hand.

"I've heard it said often, Dr. Nicholls, that any one who gets in Cephas Doane's way gets crushed. I'm not afraid of him, nor of any one else, on my own account; but I'm afraid of him because of my father. My father is getting to be an old man. Do you think I am going to do anyth——" Deacon's voice, which had been gathering in intensity, broke suddenly. He couldn't go on.

"Jim Deacon!" There was a note of exhilaration in Junior Doane's voice. He hastily climbed out of the car and joined the coach at Deacon's side. "I'm not going to defend my father now. No one knows him as I do; no one knows as I do the great big stuff that is in him. He and I have always been close and——"

"Then you know how he'd feel about any one who took your place in the boat. He can't hurt me. But he can break my father's heart——"

"Deacon, is that the opinion you have of my father!"

"Tell me the truth, Doane; is there the chance under the conditions that with a choice between two men in the bank he might fail to see Father? Isn't it human nature for a man as dominant and strong as he is, who has always had or got most of the things he wants, to feel that way?"

"Perhaps. But not if you can win out against Shelburne. Can't you see your chance, Deacon? Go in and beat Shelburne; Father'll be so glad he'll fall off the observation-train. You know how he hates Shelburne. Any soreness he has about my missing out at stroke will be directed at me—and it won't be soreness, merely regret. Don't you get it?"

"And if we lose——"

"If we lose, there's the chance that we're all in the soup."

"I'm not, if I keep out of this thing——"

"If we lose with *me* at stroke, do you suppose it will help you or any one related to you with my father when he learns that Baliol *would probably have won with you stroking?*

"My Lord, Jim Deacon," Doane went on as the other did not reply, "do you suppose this is any fun for me, arguing with you to swing an oar this afternoon when I would give my heart's blood to swing it in your place?"

"Why do you do it, then?"

"Why do I do it? Because I love Baliol. Because her interests stand above mine. Because more than anything I want to see her win. I didn't feel this way when you beat me out for stroke. I'll admit it. I didn't show my feelings, but I was thinking of nothing but my licking——"

"Ah!"

"Just a minute, Jim. I didn't realize the bigness of the thing, didn't appreciate that what I wanted to do didn't count for a damn. Baliol, only Baliol! It all came to me when you bucked out. Baliol is all that counts, Jim. If I can help her win by rooting from the observation-car, all right! But—don't think it's any fun for me urging you to come back and row. For I wanted to row this race, old boy. I—I——"

Doane's voice faltered. "But I can't; that's all. Baliol needs a better man—needs you. As for you, you've no right to consider anything else. You go in—and win."

"Win!" Jim Deacon stood in the road, rigid, his voice falling to a whisper. "Win!" Into his eyes came a vacant expression. For a moment the group stood in the middle of the road as though transfixed. Then the coach placed his hand upon Deacon's arm, gently.

"Come Jim," he said.

The afternoon had gone silently on. Jim Deacon sat on the veranda of the crew-quarters, his eyes fixed upon the river. Some of the crew were trying to read; others lounged about talking in low voices. Occasionally the referee's launch would appear off the float, the official exchanging some words with the coach while the oarsmen watched eagerly. Then the launch would turn and disappear.

"Too rough yet, boys. They're going to postpone another hour." Twice had the coach brought this word to the group of pent-up young men who in a manner of speaking were sharing the emotions of the condemned awaiting the executioner's summons. Would the up-river breeze never subside and give them conditions that would be satisfactory to the meticulous referee?

Deacon lurched heavily in his seat.

"What difference does it make so long as the shells won't sink?" he asked.

"We're ready," replied Dick Rollins. "It's Shelburne holding things up; she wants smooth water, of course. It suits me, though. Things will soften up by sunset."

"Sunset!" Deacon scowled at the western skies. "Well, sunset isn't so far off as it was."

Word came, as a matter of fact, shortly after five o'clock. The coach, with solemn face, came up to the cottage, bringing the summons. After that for a little while Jim Deacon passed through a series of vague impressions rather than living experience. There was the swift changing of clothes in the cavernous boathouse, the bearing of the boat high overhead to the edge of the float, the splash as it was lowered into the water. Mechanically he leaned forward to lace the stretcher-shoes, letting the handle of his oar rest against his stomach; mechanically he tried to slide, tested the oarlock.

Then some one gripped the blade of his oar, pushing gently outward. The shell floated gingerly out into the stream.

"Starboard oars, paddle." Responsive to the coxswain's sharp command Deacon plied his blade, and in the act there came to him clarity of perception. He was out here to win, to win not only for Baliol, but for himself, for his father. There could be no thought of not winning; the imminence of the supreme test had served to fill him with the consciousness of indomitable strength, to thrill his muscles with the call for tremendous action.

As the shell swept around a point of land, a volume of sound rolled across the waters. Out of the corner of his eye he caught view of the long observation-train, vibrant with animation, the rival colours commingled so that all emblem of collegiate affiliation was lost in a merger of quivering hue. A hill near the starting-line on the other side of the river was black with spectators, who indeed filled points of vantage all down the four miles of the course. The clouds above the western hills were turning crimson; the waters had deepened to purple and were still and silent.

"There, you hell-dogs!" The voice of the coxswain rasped in its combativeness. "Out there is Shelburne; ahead of us at the line. Who says it'll be the last time she'll be ahead of us?"

Along the beautiful line of brown, swinging bodies went a low growl, a more vicious rattle of the oarlocks.

Suddenly as Jim Deacon swung forward, a moored skiff swept past his blade, the starting-line.

"Weigh all." The coxswain's command was immediately followed by others designed to work the boat back to proper starting-position. Deacon could easily see the Shelburne crew now—big men all, ideal oarsmen to look at. Their faces were set and grim, their eyes straight ahead. So far as they gave indication, their shell might have been alone on the river. Now the Baliol shell had made sternway sufficient for the man in the skiff to seize the rudder. The Shelburne boat was already secured. Astern hovered the referee's boat, the official standing in the bow directing operations. Still astern was a larger craft filled with favoured representatives of the two colleges, the rival coaches, the crew-managers and the like.

"Are you all ready, Baliol?"

"Yes, sir." Deacon, leaning forward, felt his arms grow tense.

"Are you all ready, Shelburne?"

The affirmative was followed by the sharp report of a pistol. With a snap of his wrist Deacon beveled his oar, which bit cleanly into the water and pulled. There followed an interval of hectic stroking, oars in and out of the water as fast as could be done, while spray rose in clouds and the coxswain screamed the measure of the beat.

"Fine, Baliol." The coxswain's voice went past Deacon's ear like a bullet. "Both away together and now a little ahead at forty-two to the minute. But down now. Down—down—down—down! That's it—thirty-two to the minute. It's a long race, remember. Shelburne's dropping the beat, too. You listen to Papa, all of you; he'll keep you wise. Number three, for God's sake don't lift all the water in the river up on your blade at the finish. Shelburne's hitting it up a bit. Make it thirty-four."

"Not yet." Deacon scowled at the tense little coxswain. "I'll do the timing." Chick Seagraves nodded.

"Right. Thirty-two."

Swinging forward to the catch, his chin turned against his shoulder, Deacon studied the rival crew which with the half-mile flags flashing by had attained a lead of some ten feet. Their blades were biting the water hardly fifty feet from the end of his blade, the naked brown bodies moving back and forth in perfect rhythm and with undeniable power registered in the snap of the legs on the stretchers and the pull of the arms. Deacon's eyes swept the face of the Shelburne coxswain; it was composed. He glanced at the stroke. The work, apparently, was costing him nothing.

"They're up to thirty-four," cried Seagraves as the mile flags drew swiftly up.

"They're jockeying us, Chick. We'll show our fire when we get ready. Let 'em rave."

Vaguely there came to Deacon a sound from the river-bank—Shelburne enthusiasts acclaiming a lead of a neat half a length.

"Too much—too much." Deacon shook his head. Either Shelburne was setting out to row her rival down at the start,

or else, as Deacon suspected, she was trying to smoke Baliol out, to learn at an early juncture just what mettle was in the rival boat. A game, stout-hearted, confident crew will always do this, it being the part of good racing policy to make a rival know fear as early as possible. And Shelburne believed in herself, beyond any question of doubt.

And whether she was faking, or since Baliol could not afford to let the bid go unanswered, a lead of a quarter of a length at the mile had to be challenged:

"Give 'em ten at thirty-six!" Deacon's voice was thick with gathering effort. "Talk it up, Chick."

From the coxswain's throat issued a machine-gun fusillade of whiplash words.

"Ten, boys! A rouser now. Ten! Come on. One—two—three—four—oh, boy! Are we walking! Five—six—are they anchored over there? Seven—oh, you big brown babies! Eight—Shelburne, good night—nine—wow!—ten!"

Deacon, driving backward and forward with fiery intensity, feeling within him the strength of some huge propulsive machine, was getting his first real thrill of conflict—the thrill not only of actual competition, but of all it meant to him, personally: his father's well-being, his own career—everything was merged in a luminous background of emotion for which that glittering oar he held was the outlet.

Shelburne had met the spurt, but the drive of the Baliol boat was not to be denied. Gradually the two prows came abreast, and then Deacon, not stopping at the call of ten, but fairly carrying the crew along with him, swung on with undiminished ferocity, while Seagraves' voice rose into a shrill crescendo of triumph as Baliol forged to the lead.

"They know a little now." Deacon's voice was a growl as gradually he reduced the beat to thirty-two, Shelburne already having diminished the stroke.

Deacon studied them. They were rowing along steadily, the eyes of their coxswain turned curiously upon the Baliol shell. He suspected the little man would like nothing better than to have Baliol break her back to the two-mile mark and thus dig a watery grave. He suspected also, that, failing Baliol's willingness to do this, the test would now be forced upon her. For Shelburne was a heavy crew with all sorts of staying power. What Deacon had to keep in mind was that

his eight was not so rugged and had therefore to be nursed along, conserving energy wherever possible.

It was in the third mile that the battle of wits and judgment had to be carried to conclusion, the fourth mile lurking as a mere matter of staying power and ability to stand the gaff. Deacon's idea was that at present his crew was leading because Shelburne was not unwilling for the present that this should be. How true this was became evident after the two-mile flags had passed, when the Shelburne oarsmen began to lay to their strokes with tremendous drive, the boat creeping foot by foot upon the rival shell until the Baliol lead had been overcome and Shelburne herself swept to the fore.

Deacon raised the stroke slightly, to thirty-three, but soon dropped to thirty-two, watching Shelburne carefully lest she make a runaway then and there. Baliol was half a length astern at the two-and-a-half mile mark, passing which the Shelburne crew gave themselves up to a tremendous effort to kill off her rival then and there.

"Jim! They're doing thirty-six—walking away."

The coxswain's face was white and drawn.

But Deacon continued to pass up a thirty-two stroke while the Shelburne boat slid gradually away until at the three-mile mark there was a foot of clear water between its rudder and the prow of the Baliol shell.

Deacon glanced at the coxswain. A mile to go—one deadly mile.

"Thirty-six," he said. "Shelburne's can't have much more left."

The time had passed for study now. Gritting his teeth, Deacon bent to his work, his eyes fixed upon the swaying body of the coxswain, whose sharp staccato voice snapped out the measure; the beat of the oars in the locks came as one sound.

"Right, boys! Up we come. Bully—bully—bully! Half a length now. Do you hear? Half a length! Give me a quarter, boys. Eh, Godfrey! We've got it. Now up and at 'em, Baliol. Oh, you hell-dogs!"

As in a dream Deacon saw the Shelburne boat drift into view, saw the various oarsmen slide past until he and the rival stroke were rowing practically abeam.

"That's for you, Dad," he muttered—and smiled.

He saw the men swing with quickened rhythm, saw the spray fly like bullets from the Shelburne blades.

"Look out." There was a note of anguish in Seagraves' voice. "Shelburne's spurting again."

A malediction trembled upon Deacon's lips. So here was the joker held in reserve by the rival crew! Had Baliol anything left? Had he anything left? Grave doubt was mounting in his soul. Away swept the Shelburne boat inches at a stroke until the difference in their positions was nearly a length. Three miles and a half! Not an observer but believed that this gruelling contest had been worked out. Seagraves, his eyes running tears, believed it as he swung backward and forward exhorting his men. Half a mile more! The crews were now rowing between the anchored lines of yachts and excursion-craft. The finish boat was in sight.

And now Deacon, exalted by something nameless, uttered a cry and began to give to Baliol more than he really had. Surely, steadily, he raised his stroke while his comrades, like the lion-hearts they were, took it up and put the sanction of common authority upon it. Thirty-four! Thirty-six! Not the spurt of physical prowess, but of indomitable mentality.

"Up we come!" Seagraves' voice was shrill like a bugle. He could see expressions of stark fear in the faces of the rival oarsmen. They had given all they had to give, had given enough to win almost any race. But here in this race they had not given enough.

On came the Baliol shell with terrific impulse. Quarter of a mile; Shelburne passed, her prow hanging doggedly on to the Baliol rudder.

Victory! Deacon's head became clear. None of the physical torture he had felt in the past mile was now registered upon his consciousness. No thought but that of impending victory!

"Less than a quarter of a mile, boys. In the stretch. Now—my God!"

Following the coxswain's broken exclamation, Deacon felt an increased resistance upon his blade.

"Eh?"

"Innis has carried away his oarlock." The eyes of the coxswain strained upon Deacon's face.

Deacon gulped. Strangely a picture of his father filled his mind. His face hardened.

"All right! Tell him to throw his oar away and swing with the rest. Don't move your rudder now. Keep it straight as long as you can."

From astern the sharp eyes of the Shelburne cox had detected the accident to Baliol's Number Six. His voice was chattering stridently.

Deacon, now doing the work practically of two men, was undergoing torture which shortly would have one of two effects. Either he would collapse or his spirit would carry him beyond the claims of overtaxed physique. One stroke, two strokes, three strokes—a groan escaped his lips. Then so far as personality, personal emotions, personal feelings were concerned, Jim Deacon ceased to function. He became merely part of the mechanism of a great effort, the principal guiding part.

And of all those rowing men of Baliol only the coxswain saw the Shelburne boat creeping up slowly, inexorably—eight mer against seven. For nearly a quarter of a mile the grim fight was waged.

"Ten strokes more, boys!"

The prow of the Shelburne shell was on a line with Baliol's Number Two.

"One—two—three—four——" The bow of the Shelburne boat plunged up abeam Baliol's bow oar.

"Five—six—God, boys!—seven——"

The voice of the coxswain swept upward in a shrill scream. A gun boomed; the air rocked with the screech and roar of whistles.

Slowly Deacon opened his eyes. Seagraves, the coxswain, was standing up waving his megaphone. Rollins, at Number Seven, lay prone over his oar. Innis, who had broken his oarlock, sat erect; Wallace, at Number Five, was down. So was the bow oar. Mechanically Deacon's hand sought the water, splashing the body of the man in front of him. Then suddenly a mahogany launch dashed alongside. In the bow was a large man with white moustache and florid face and burning black eyes. His lips were drawn in a broad grin which seemed an anomaly upon the face of Cephas Doane.

If so he immediately presented a still greater anomaly. He laughed aloud.

"Poor old Shelburne! I—George! The first in four years! I never saw anything quite like that. We've talked of Baliol's rowing-spirit—eh! Here, you Deacon, let me give you a hand out of the shell. We'll run you back to quarters."

Deacon, wondering, was pulled to the launch and then suddenly stepped back, his jaw falling, his eyes alight as a man advanced from the stern.

"Dad!"

"Yes," chuckled Doane. "We came up together—to celebrate."

"You mean—you mean——" Jim Deacon's voice faltered.

"Yes, I mean——" Cephas Doane stopped suddenly. "I think in justice to my daughter-in-law to be, Jane Bostwick, that some explanation is in order."

"Yes, sir." Deacon, his arm about his father's shoulder, stared at the man.

"You see, Dr. Nicholls had the idea that you needed a finer edge put on your rowing spirit. So I got Jane to cook up the story about that cashier business at the bank."

"You did!"

"Yes. Of course your father was appointed. The only trouble was that Jane, bright and clever as she is, bungled her lines."

"Bungled!" Deacon's face cleared. "That's what Dr. Nicholls said about her on the road, the day I bucked out. I remember the word somehow."

"She bungled, yes. She was to have made it very clear that by winning you would escape my alleged wrath—or rather, your father would. I knew you would row hard for Baliol, but I thought you might row superhumanly for your father."

"Well," Jim Deacon flushed, then glanced proudly at his father—"you were right, sir—I would."

PROFESSOR TODD'S USED CAR

By L. H. ROBBINS

From *Everybody's Magazine*

HE WAS a meek little man with sagging frame, dim lamps and feeble ignition. Anxiously he pressed the salesman to tell him which of us used cars in the wareroom was the slowest and safest.

The salesman laid his hand upon me and declared soberly: "You can't possibly go wrong on this one, Mr. Todd." To a red-haired boy he called, "Willie, drive Mr. Todd out for a lesson."

We ran to the park and stopped beside a lawn. "Take the wheel," said Willie.

Mr. Todd demurred. "Let me watch you awhile," he pleaded. "You see, I'm new at this sort of thing. In mechanical matters I am helpless. I might run somebody down or crash into a tree. I—I don't feel quite up to it to-day, so just let me ride around with you and get used to the—the motion, as it were."

"All you need is nerve," Willie replied. "The quickest way for you to get nerve is to grab hold here and, as it were, drive."

"Driving, they say, *does* give a man self-confidence," our passenger observed tremulously. "Quite recently I saw an illustration of it. I saw an automobilist slap his wife's face while traveling thirty miles an hour."

"They will get careless," said Willie.

Mr. Todd clasped the wheel with quivering hands and braced himself for the ordeal.

"Set her in low till her speed's up," Willie directed. "Then wiggle her into high."

It was too mechanical for Mr. Todd. Willie translated with scornful particularity. Under our pupil's diffident manipu-

lation we began to romp through the park at the rate of one mile an hour.

Willie fretted. "Shoot her some gas," said he. "Give it to her. Don't be a-scared." He pulled down the throttle-lever himself.

My sudden roaring was mingled with frightened outcries from Todd. "Stop! Wait a minute! Whoa! Help!"

Fortunately for my radiator, the lamp-post into which he steered me was poorly rooted. He looked at the wreckage of the glass globe on the grass, and declared he had taken as much of the theory of motoring as he could absorb in one session.

"This is the only lesson I can give you free," said Willie. "You'd better keep on while the learning's cheap."

To free education and to compulsory education Mr. Todd pronounced himself opposed. Cramming was harmful to the student; the elective method was the only humane one. He put off the evil hour by engaging Willie as a private tutor for the remaining afternoons of the month.

I have met many rabbits but only one Todd. He would visit me in the barn and look at me in awe by the half-hour. Yet I liked him; I felt drawn toward him in sympathy, for he and I were fellow victims of the hauteur of Mrs. Todd.

In my travels I have never encountered a glacier. When I do run across one I shall be reminded, I am certain, of Mr. Todd's lady.

"So you are still alive?" were her cordial words as we rolled into the yard on the first afternoon.

"Yes, my dear." His tone was almost apologetic.

"Did he drive it?" she asked Willie.

"I'll say so, ma'am."

She looked me over coldly. When she finished, I had shrunk to the dimensions of a wheelbarrow. When Todd sized me up in the warehouse only an hour before, I had felt as imposing as a furniture van.

"Put it in the barn," said Mrs. Todd, "before a bird carries it off."

I began to suspect that a certain little stranger was not un-animously welcome in that household. For a moment I was reassured, but only for a moment.

"John Quincy Burton says," she observed, "that a little old used car like this is sometimes a very good thing to own."

"That is encouraging," said Todd, brightening. In his relief he explained to Willie that John Quincy Burton drove the largest car in the neighbourhood and was therefore to be regarded as an authority.

"Yes," Mrs. Todd concluded, "he says he thinks of buying one himself to carry in his tool-box."

Willie was an excellent teacher, though a severe disciplinarian.

But by way of amends for the rigours of the training, Willie would take Mr. Todd after the practice hour for a spin around the park. At those times I came to learn that the collision I had had with a trolley-car before Todd bought me had not left me with any constitutional defect. I still had power under my hood, and speed in my wheels. But what good were power and speed to me now? I doubted that Todd would ever push me beyond a crawl.

Yet I had hope, for when his relaxation from the tension of a lesson had loosened his tongue he would chatter to Willie about self-confidence.

"Some day you say, I shall be able to drive without thinking?"

"Sure! You won't have to use your bean any more'n when you walk."

At nights, when no one knew, Mr. Todd would steal into the barn and, after performing the motions of winding me up, would sit at the wheel and make believe to drive.

"I advance the spark," he would mutter, "I release the brake, I set the gear, and ever so gently I let in the clutch. Ha! We move, we are off! As we gather speed I pull the gear-lever back, then over, then forward. Now, was that right? At any rate we are going north, let us say, in Wither-spoon Street. I observe a limousine approaching from the east in a course perpendicular to mine. It has the right of way, Willie says, so I slip the clutch out, at the same time checking the flow of gasoline. . . ."

Thus in imagination he would drive; get out, crank, get in again, and roll away in fancy, earnestly practising by the hour in the dark and silent barn.

"I'm getting it," he would declare. "I really believe I'm getting it!"

And he got it. In his driving examination he stalled only once, stopping dead across a trolley track in deference to a push-cart. But he was out and in and off again in ten seconds, upbraiding me like an old-timer.

Said the inspector, stepping out at last and surely offering a prayer of thanks to his patron saint: "You're pretty reckless yet on corners, my friend." But he scribbled his O. K.

The written examination in the City Hall Mr. Todd passed with high honours. Willie, who was with us on the fateful morning, exclaimed in admiration: "One hundred! Well, Mr. Todd, you're alive, after all—from the neck up, at least."

In gratitude for the compliment, the glowing graduate pressed a bonus of two dollars into the panegyrist's palm. "Willie," he exulted, "did you hear the inspector call me reckless?"

I can scarcely think of the Todd of the succeeding weeks as the same Todd who bought me. He changed even in looks. He would always be a second, of course, but his frame had rigidity now, his lamps sparkled, he gripped the wheel with purposeful hands and trampled the pedals in the way an engine likes. In his new assurance he reminded me strongly of a man who drove me for a too brief while in my younger days—a rare fellow, now doing time, I believe, in the penitentiary.

No longer Todd and I needed the traffic cop's "Get on out of there, you corn-sheller!" to push us past the busy intersection of Broad and Main streets. We conquered our tendency to scamper panic-stricken for the sidewalk at the raucous bark of a jitney bus. In the winding roads of the park we learned to turn corners on two wheels and rest the other pair for the reverse curve.

One remembered day we went for a run in the country. On a ten-mile piece of new macadam he gave me all the gas I craved. It was the final test, the consummation, and little old Mr. Todd was all there. I felt so good I could have blown my radiator cap off to him.

For he was a master I could trust—and all my brother used cars, whether manufactured or merely born, will understand

what comfort that knowledge gives a fellow. I vowed I would do anything for that man! On that very trip, indeed, I carried him the last homeward mile on nothing in my tank but a faint odour.

II

Mrs. Todd was one of those gentle souls who get their happiness in being unhappy in the presence of their so-called loved ones. She was perpetually displeased with Todd.

His Christian name was James, but she did not speak Christian to him. When she hailed him from the house she called him "Jay-eems"—the "eems" an octave higher than the "Jay."

He would drop the grease-can or the monkey-wrench to rush to her side.

"Look at your sleeves!" she would say. "Your best shirt!" Words failing her, she would sigh and go into a silence that was worse than words. He was a great burden to her.

Humbly he entreated her one day for an obsolete tooth-brush. "I want to clean spark-plugs with it," he explained.

"Next," she replied, icily, "you'll be taking your little pet to the dentist, I suppose."

From such encounters Jay-eems would creep back to the barn and seek consolation in tinkering around me.

He liked to take the lid off my transmission-box and gaze at my wondrous works. He was always tightening my axle-burrs, or dosing me with kerosene through my hot-air pipe, or toying with my timer. While he was never so smart as Willie about such things, he was intelligent and quick to learn; and this was not surprising to me after I discovered the nature of his occupation in life.

I had taken him to be a retired silk-worm fancier, a chronic jurymen, or something of the sort. But shiver my wind-shield if he wasn't a professor in a college!

On the morning when first he dared to drive me to his work, the college must have got wind of our coming, for the students turned out in a body to cheer him as he steered in at the campus gate, and the faculty gathered on the steps to shake his hand.

A bald-headed preceptor asked him if he meant to cyanide

me and mount me on a pin for preservation in the college museum. The chancellor inquired if Todd had identified me. Todd said he had. He said I was a perfect specimen of *Automobilum cursus gaudium*, the most beautiful species of the *Golikelleæ* family. It was the nearest he ever came to profanity in my hearing. I suppose he got it from associating with Willie.

They demanded a speech, and he made one—about me. He said that my name was *Hilaritas*, signifying joy. He said, among other flattering things, that I was no common mundane contraption, though such I might seem to the untutored eye. In their studies of the Greek drama they had read of gods from the machine. I was a machine from the gods. In my cylinders I consumed nectar vapour, in my goo-cups ambrosia, in my radiator flowed the crystal waters of the Fount of Bandusia.

Three other items of his eulogium I remember: The breath of Pan inflated my tires, I could climb Olympus in high, and he, James Todd, a mere professor in a college, while sitting at my wheel, would not bare his head to Zeus himself, no, nor even to the chairman of the college board of trustees.

His nonsense appeared to be as popular in that part of town as it was unpopular in another. They gave the varsity yell with his name at the end.

The day came when Mrs. Todd risked her life in our sportive company. She made it clear to us that she went protesting. She began her pleasantries by complaining that my doors were trivial. Straightening her hat, she remarked that the John Quincy Burtons' car top never took a woman's scalp off.

"But theirs is only a one-man top," Todd hinted vaguely.

"Whatever you mean by that is too deep for me," she said, adding bitterly, "Yours is a one-boy top, I presume."

He waived the point and asked where she preferred to make her *début* as an automobilist.

"Back roads, by all means," she answered.

As we gained the street a pea-green Mammoth purred past, the passengers putting out their heads to look at us.

"Goodness!" she sighed. "There go the John Quincy Burtons now."

"We can soon join them," said Todd confidently.

She expostulated. "Do you think I have no pride?" Yet we went in pursuit of the John Quincy Burton dust-cloud as it moved toward the park.

"Since you have no regard for my feelings," said she, "you may let me out."

"Oh, no, Amanda, my dear. Why, I'm going to give you a spin to Mountindale!"

"I do not care to be dragged there," she declared. "That is where the John Quincy Burtons ride."

"Aren't they nice people? It seems to me I've heard you sing hosannas to their name these last twenty years."

They were nice people indeed. That was just it, she said. Did he suspect her of yearning to throw herself in the way of nice people on the day of her abasement? If he chose to ignore her sentiments in the matter, he might at least consider his own interests. Had he forgotten that John Quincy Burton was chairman of the board of trustees of the college? Would the head of the department of classical languages acquire merit in Mr. Burton's eyes through dashing about under Mr. Burton's nose in a pitiable little last-century used car that squeaked?

Todd gripped the wheel tighter and gave me gas.

"You missed that storm sewer by an inch!" she exclaimed.

"My aim is somewhat wild yet," he admitted. "Perhaps I'll get the next one."

"Jay-eems!"

"My dear, we have a horn, remember."

"You did not see that baby carriage until we were right upon it! Don't tell me you did, sir, for I know better."

"I saw it," said Todd, "and I was sure it wouldn't run over us. As you see, it didn't. Trust a baby carriage my love."

His humour, she informed him, was on a par with his driving. Also it was in poor taste at such a moment.

In time of danger, he replied, the brave man jests.

We were now in the park. We clipped a spray of leaves off a syringa bush. On a curve we slid in loose gravel to the wrong side.

"James Todd!"

"Yes, my dear?"

"Let me out! I decline to be butchered to make a holiday for a motormaniac."

"Don't talk to the motormaniac," said Todd.

She clutched a top support and gasped for breath, appalled at his audacity, or my speed, or both. In the straight reaches I could see the Burton Mammoth a quarter of a mile ahead. When it swung into the broad avenue that leads to the mountain, we were holding our own.

"You are following them—deliberately," said Mrs. Todd.

"Yet not so deliberately, at that. Do you feel us pick up my dear, when I give her gas? Aha!" he laughed. "I agree with you, however, that the order of precedence is unsatisfactory. Why should we follow the Burtons, indeed?"

We went after them; we gave them the horn and overtook and passed them on a stiff grade, amid cheers from both cars. But all of our cheering was done by Todd.

"Now they are following us," said he. "Do you feel better, my dear?"

"Better!" she lamented. "How can I ever look them in the face again?"

"Turn around," he suggested, "and direct your gaze through the little window in the back curtain."

She bade him stop at the next corner. She would walk home. She was humiliated. Never had she felt so ashamed.

"Isn't that an odd way to feel when we have beaten the shoes off them?"

"But they will think we tried to."

"So we did," he chuckled; "and we walked right past them, in high, while Burton was fussing with his gear shift. Give our little engine a fair go at a hill, my dear——"

"I am not in the least interested in engines, sir. I am only mortified beyond words."

She had words a-plenty, however.

"Isn't it bad enough for you to drive your little rattletrap to college and get into the paper about it? No; you have to show it off in a fashionable avenue, and run races with the best people in Ashland, and scream at them like a freshman, and make an exhibition of me!"

His attention was absorbed in hopping out from under a truck coming in from a side street. A foolish driver would

have slowed and crashed. I was proud of Todd. But his lady was not.

"You have no right to go like this. You don't know enough. You will break something."

He had already broken the speed law. Unknown to him, a motor-cycle cop was tagging close behind us on our blind side.

"If you think this is going, my dear," said Todd reassuringly, "wait till we strike the turnpike. Then I'll show you what little Hilaritas can really do."

"Stop at the car barns," she commanded.

We crossed the car-barn tracks at a gallop. The cop rode abreast of us now. "Cut it out, Bill," he warned.

"You see?" she crowed. "You will wind up in jail and give the papers another scandal. Why didn't you stop at the car barns?"

"Because we are going to Mountindale," he explained cheerily; "where the nice people drive. Perhaps we shall see the John Quincy Burtons again—as we come back."

"If we ever do come back!"

"Or how would you like to have supper with them up there?"

She had gone into one of her silences.

III

We settled down for the long pull over First Mountain. Todd slowed my spark and gave me my head. Then he addressed the partner of his joy-ride in a new voice: "Amanda, my dear, you and I need to have a frank little understanding."

She agreed.

"For some years past," he began, "I have borne without complaint, even without resentment, a certain attitude that you have seen fit to adopt toward me. I have borne it patiently because I felt that to an extent I deserved it."

My floor boards creaked as she gathered her forces for the counter attack. He went on recklessly:

"In the beginning of our life together, Amanda, you were ambitious. You longed for wealth and position and that sort of thing, in which respect you were like the rest of men and women. Like most people, my dear, you have been disap-

pointed; but unlike most of them you persist in quarrelling with the awards of fortune, just as to-day you are quarrelling with this plebeian car of ours. As you speak of Hilaritas, so you speak of me. At breakfast this morning, for example, you reminded me, for perhaps the tenth time since Sunday, that you are chained to a failure. Those were your words, my dear—chained to a failure.”

“Do you call yourself a dazzling success?” she asked.

“Not dazzling, perhaps,” he replied, “and yet—yes—yes, I believe I do.”

“What I told you at breakfast was that Freddy Burton makes one hundred dollars a week, and he is only twenty-four—not half as old as you.”

“Freddy Burton is engaged in the important occupation of selling pickles,” Todd answered, “and I am only an educator of youth. Long ago I reached my maximum—three thousand dollars. From one point of view I don’t blame you for looking upon me as a futility. I presume I am. Nor will I chide you for not taking the luck of life in a sportsmanlike spirit. But I do insist——”

“At last!” she broke in. “At last I understand some pencil notes that I found yesterday when I cleaned out your desk. A minute ago I thought you were out of your head. Now I see that this—this frightfulness of yours is premeditated. Premeditated, James Todd! You prepared this speech in advance!”

Between you and me, she was right. I had heard him practise it in the barn.

He took her arraignment calmly. “Hereafter,” said he, “please refrain from cleaning out my desk.”

I heard her catch her breath. “You have never talked to me like this before; never!” she said. “You have never dared. And that is precisely the trouble with you, James Todd. You won’t talk back; you won’t speak up for your rights. It is the cross of my life.”

From the sound, I think she wept.

“You are the same in the outside world as you are at home. You let the college trustees pay you what they please. You slave and slave and wear yourself out for three thousand a year when we might have twenty if you went into something else. And when your building-loan stock matures

and you do get a little money, you spend it for this—this underbred little sewing-machine, and lure me out in it, and lecture me, as if I—as if I were to blame. I don't know what has come over you."

I knew what had come over him. I knew the secret of the new spirit animating the frail personality of Professor Todd. And Willie knew. I recalled that boy's prophetic words: "The quickest way to get nerve is to grab hold here and drive." I worried, nevertheless. I wondered if my little man could finish what he had started.

He could. As we rolled down the mountain into the ten-mile turnpike where he and I had rediscovered our youth, he concluded his discourse without missing an explosion. I knew his peroration by heart.

"To end this painful matter, my dear, I shall ask you in future to accord me at least the civility, if not the respect, to which a hard-working man and a faithful husband is entitled. I speak in all kindness when I say that I have decided to endure no more hazing. I hope you understand that I have made this decision for your sake as well as for mine, for the psychological effect of hazing is quite as harmful to the hazer as to the hazed. Please govern yourself accordingly."

He opened the throttle wide, and we touched thirty-five miles. I felt a wild wobble in my steering-gear. I heard Todd's sharp command—"Kindly keep your hands off the wheel while I am driving."

At the Mountain Dale Club Todd descended.

"Will you come in and have a lemonade, my dear?" he asked. There was a heartbroken little squeak in his voice.

"Thank you," she replied frigidly. "I have had all the acid I can assimilate in one pleasant day."

"May I remind you," said he, stiffening with the gentle insistence of a steel spring, "that I am not to be addressed in sarcastic tones any longer?"

The Mammoth slid up beside us. The stout John Quincy Burton at the wheel shouted jovially: "I tell you what, Todd, when our soberest university professors get the speed bug, I tremble for civilization!"

My owner grinned with pleasure.

"Mrs. Todd," said Burton, "after that trimming from

your road-burning husband, I'll stand treat. Won't you join us?"

"Yes, Mrs. Todd, do be persuaded," Mrs. Burton chimed in. "After twenty miles with your Barney Oldfield you need nourishment, I'm sure. You and I can talk about his recklessness while he and Mr. Burton have their little conference."

If Todd had an appointment for a conference there at that hour with Burton, I am positive it was news to Mrs. Todd and me. I could feel her weight growing heavier on my cushion springs.

"Thank you for the invitation," she replied, "but I am so badly shaken up, I prefer to sit out here."

To which her husband added, laughingly: "She wouldn't risk having her new car stolen for anything."

It was twilight before we started for home, the Burtons pulling out ahead of us. At the beginning of the climb over the mountain I saw the Mammoth stop. We drew alongside.

"Out of gas, confound it," growled Burton, "and five miles from a service station!"

"I'd lend you some, only I haven't much myself," said Todd. "Got a rope?"

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, we can. We can pull you and never know it. Hitch on behind. We like to travel in stylish company, Mrs. Todd and I."

So we towed them over the mountain and left them at a red pump. John Quincy Burton's gratitude was immense.

"The pleasure is all ours," Todd assured him. "But, say, old man!"

"Well?"

"You ought to buy a little old used car like this some time to carry in your tool-box."

They were still laughing when we drove away.

Not a word did Mrs. Todd utter on the homeward journey; but in the privacy of our humble barn—

"Oh!" she cried. "I could *die*! Why did you have to say that to Mr. Burton?"

"Amanda!"

She subsided, but she had not surrendered.

"You didn't tell me you had an engagement with him. What——"

Todd laughed. "I was chosen this week, my dear, as a grievance committee of one, representing the teaching staff at the college, to put a few cold facts into John Quincy Burton's ear."

"You?"

"Precisely, my dear. I was the only man in the faculty who seemed to have the—the self-confidence necessary. And I made Burton see the point. I have his promise that the college trustees will campaign the state this summer for a half-million-dollar emergency fund, a good slice of which will go toward salary increases."

"Well! I must say——"

She did not say it. Silently she left us.

He lingered a while in the barn. He opened my hood, for I was quite warm from the towing job. He examined a new cut in one of my tires and loosened my hand-brake a notch. He couldn't seem to find enough to do for me.

From the house came a hail. I am not sure that he did not hold his breath as he listened.

"James, dear!" again.

"Hello!" he answered.

"James, dear, won't you bring your automobile pliers, please, and see if you can open this jar of marmalade?"

My little man went in whistling.

THE THING THEY LOVED

By MARICE RUTLEDGE

From *The Century Magazine*

"They had vowed to live only for one another. The theme of their love was sublime enough, but the instruments were fallible. Human beings can rarely sustain a lofty note beyond the measure of a supreme moment."

WHEN she told her husband that David Cannon had arranged for her a series of recitals in South America, she looked to him for swift response. She was confident that anything touching on her professional life would kindle his eye and warm his voice. It was, in fact, that professional life as she interpreted it with the mind of an artist, the heart of a child, which had first drawn him to her; he had often admitted as much. During one year of rare comradeship he had never failed in his consideration for her work. He would know, she felt sure, that to go on a concert tour with David Cannon, to sing David Cannon's songs under such conditions, presented good fortune in more than one way. He would rejoice accordingly.

But his "Why, my dear, South America!" came flatly upon her announcement. It lacked the upward ring, and his eye did not kindle, his voice did not warm. He himself felt the fictitious inflection, for he added hastily, with happier effect: "It's a wonderful chance, dearest, isn't it?" His voice by then had gained in heartiness, and his smile, always worshipful when turned on her, contained this time something of apology. So close were they, though, in thought, spoken or unspoken, that he had sounded a tiny alarm. Her radiance perceptibly waned. A moment before she had stood, a glowing, vital creature, beside him, eyes and lips singing

a duet of delight; now with questioning heart she leaned toward her loved one.

"What is it? Don't you want me to go? I thought you liked David. Can't you come, too, Oliver?"

"You know I can't, dear," she heard him say with an attempt at lightness. Then he added: "But it's a great chance for you. You'll take it, of course. It was only the thought of losing you even for a little while. What selfish brutes we men are!" He had recovered himself, had defined his passing reserve in loverlike terms, and was newly aware of unworthiness. The luxury of tender persuasion, of arguing her into a sense of sweet security, concerned him next. He could not say enough, and said too much.

They were mellow against an intimate background of yellow walls lit by fire and lamps. Myra's grand piano projected sleek and dark from a corner of warm shadow. The silver tea-set gleamed pale on a slender-legged table; a fragrance of narcissus spread dreamily. Oliver sank on the couch, drawing her down where she could become all feminine. She was that, and most adorably, her bright hair soft about lax brows, her full lips parted, her strong white hands lying in his like brooding birds. He talked on, and she played content for a while; but a moment came when with a sudden maternal gesture she drew his dark, willing head to her shoulder.

"Let's forget South America for to-night," she said.

He would not, could not, drop the subject. He had been so clumsy in not realizing what it all meant to her; but her news had come as such a surprise. She had seen David Cannon, then, that afternoon?

Yes, he was on his way down to her to settle the date of their concert and to propose this South American scheme. But she need not decide immediately.

He protested that her triumph there would crown him. If he were not a poor young architect attached to his blue prints, he would follow her. As it was, his duller duty lay at home. She caught a flatness of tone, and met it with a vigorous profession of faith in his work. His art was more useful than hers, more enduring. His music was in stone; hers was no greater than the trilling of a bird. He thought this over, moved from her embrace, sat erect, and patted his tie. Well, he summed up, each had a working life converging to a

common end. Let her sing Cannon's songs to South America. Her voice would reach him. Then let her come back quickly. He could not conceive of life without her. It would seem strange to be a bachelor again, he went on, with a sigh meant to be comical. He supposed he would eat at his club when he was not invited out. He hoped her friends would take pity on him.

"You mean our friends," she corrected.

"You're the magnet, dear."

"I attracted you," she conceded happily. Then, with a start, she said: "Do you know what time it is? And we're dining with the Wickeses at seven."

"I never have you to myself any more," he objected. "If I were an old-fashioned husband, I should be jealous of every one who sees or talks to you."

"But you're not an old-fashioned husband," she reminded him.

"I try not to be." He had risen from the couch, and was making his way to the door, where he paused to look back at her. "Wear the blue brocade to-night, dear, and do your hair that new way."

"The way Martigues suggested? I thought you didn't like it."

He hesitated only a second.

"It's a bit extreme," he had to confess, "but it suits you."

She came toward him then, laughing.

"You see, you give me over to them."

"I can afford to," he said.

They were late, of course, to the dinner. Despite her effort at brightness, Oliver felt her graver mood. He watched her with a shadowy anxiety. Her smile, when her glance sought him out among the chattering guests, did not entirely reassure him. He had never loved her more than this evening when she seemed so removed from him, so easily and brilliantly a guest of honor. What hold had these strangers on her? They could only misread the superficial sparkle of her eyes, the gracious movements of her uncovered neck and arms. He decided then that the blue brocade was too conspicuous. She must not wear it in South America. And her honey-coloured hair, piled high, with a fantastic Spanish comb

flaring above the topmost curls, struck him as needlessly theatrical. He blamed Martigues for that. His humour was not improved by the Basque painter's voluble compliments on the success of a coiffure he felt to be his own creation. The fellow was too familiar, thought Oliver, with increasing irritation. He darkened, grew glum and silent; and when, after dinner, Martigues approached him with a luckless tribute to Madame Shaw's superlative loveliness, he answered curtly, and turned on his heel. Myra witnessed the brief discourtesy, and later very gently taxed him with it. What had the unfortunate artist done? He faced her like a sulky boy and would not answer; but she was quick to penetrate his grievance. She laughed then, as a woman laughs who has nothing to conceal, declaring that Martigues's taste was not infallible, and that Oliver knew best what became his Myra. She soon wooed him back to his old charming self, and the incident passed. But there were others on the following days, and Myra grew thoughtful.

She and Oliver were seldom alone. Her joy of life, her vitality, her very talent, depended on a multitude of impressions, on innumerable personal contacts. She belonged to a rich, throbbing world of emotions; she gathered passion for her song from the yearnings, the anonymous aspirations, even the crudities of the human forces about her.

She was Oliver's most gloriously when most surrounded. His pride was centred on her; it was centred, however, on the brilliant returns of her actual presence—a presence which was never too far removed in flesh or spirit to deprive him of a certain naïve assumption of ownership. That she should continue all the dear, familiar fascinations beyond his sight or touch, in a far-away land, with David Cannon as a daily companion, was another matter. Not that he was jealous of David. No one man stood out as a rival. But Cannon travelling with Myra, sharing artistic triumphs with her, escorting her to entertainments given in her honour, Cannon, in fact, associated in foreign minds with the beautiful cantatrice, offended the inviolable rights of his lover's vanity. He would have her less beautiful, less gifted, not more faithful.

Exquisitely sensitive where he was concerned, Myra detected this subtle change in his attitude toward her and her

work. The origins of the change, she knew, were obscurely lodged in the male egoism. He himself was not aware of them. He seemed nearer and dearer than ever, even more ardent. He wanted her constantly within range of his eyes and hands that he might in a thousand coaxing or, often, petulant ways assert a fond dominion. She yielded gladly to that sweet pressure. Strangely enough for a woman of her independent habits, to be so loved, roused elemental instincts the more powerful since she had never before given them outlet. So she allowed his illusions of mastery full play, which was dangerous, as gradually she altered the delicate balance of their relationship.

A restless month went by. It was February.

Unfortunately, Oliver's work failed to engross him. He grew moodier, more exacting. If Myra arrived home late, he wanted to know where she had been, whom she had seen. Were they dining out, he muttered unsociable objections; were people coming to the house, he complained of the lack of privacy. What a whirl they lived in! So they did, but what was the remedy? Myra herself felt helpless in a tangle of engagements. They overpowered her. She could not seem to cut her way through them. Then there were rehearsals for the concert. David Cannon came to her or she went to him nearly every day. Usually Oliver was present, putting in his opinion between each song. Did David think the South Americans would appreciate that kind of music? How did he think they would like Myra? And so on and on.

David Cannon, never patient, a rough-tongued, self-absorbed genius, resented these interruptions, and was brief in his methods of expressing as much. Even Myra, the most tactful of diplomatists, could not smooth over occasional ugly moments between the two men. She understood Oliver better than he understood himself. His unreasoning love, his apprehensive vanity, would have unsettled a less maternal spirit; but she found a kind of mystic wonder in it, he battled so blindly for possession of her. He was in her way, and she could not advance without pushing him aside. Had he come to her and blustered, "You shall not leave me for any purpose whatsoever," she would have denied him the right of dictation; but there was no such conflict of wills.

They were both involved in this love of their making—a love whose demands were treacherous. Each day brought up trivial attacks, fancied grievances, little fears unavowed; but when she sought to meet the issue squarely, it eluded her. Oliver's nightly repentance for his daily whims and suspicions drew her nightly into his arms. Enfolded there, she felt moored to his love; and, sleepless, she questioned any life apart.

Two days before the recital, David Cannon, with whom she was going over the programme for the last time, turned suddenly from the piano with an impatient shrug of his shoulders.

"Rotten!" he said brutally, peering up at her. "You're not doing yourself justice. What's the matter with you?" Beneath the strong, overhanging brow his little eyes glowered fiercely.

They happened to be alone that afternoon in his great bare studio, where no soft background or dim lights conspired to hide her dejection. She had sung badly. She knew it, but she could not answer such a brusque attack, could not defend herself against harsh questioning.

"I don't know. Perhaps I'm tired," she said.

David Cannon rose from the piano with the powerful lunging movement of a bull.

"You tired? Nonsense!" His charge sent him beyond her a pace. He wheeled and came up close. He was shorter than she, but the sheer force of the man topped her. His keen little eyes looked her over, took in her bright, drooping head, and her sloping-shouldered, slim-waisted health. "Tired!" he grunted. "That's an excuse, not a reason." He tapped his heart and forehead. "Your troubles lie here and here."

She tried to smile, with a lift of her eyebrows.

"What do you know about it?"

"I know more than you think I do," he flung at her, frowning. "You're worried about something, and when you worry, you can't sing. You're made that way, and I suppose you can't help it. Don't interrupt yet," he fairly shouted at her as she began to protest. "I've watched over and taught you for three years. I ought to know."

"I owe you a lot," she said faintly.

"You owe me nothing," he snapped. "Your debt is to yourself."

She could not fend off that merciless look, which went through and through her. "If my debt is to myself, I need pay only if I choose," she tried to jest.

"Don't make that mistake," he warned. "Your work is your life. I tell you that, and I know."

"I wonder," she said more to herself than to him.

He looked at her grimly.

"Just as I thought. Same old question—marriage. You're jealous, or he's jealous of God knows whom or what. And your voice goes to pieces. Which is it?" he demanded. "Is Oliver misbehaving?"

"Of course not," she said indignantly.

"Humph! Well, he's faithful, you're faithful. You've both got talent, friends, a home, a profession. What more do you want?"

"There are other—jealousies," she said slowly, and with gathering passion she went on: "I suppose I owe you some explanation, David, though you won't understand. Oliver is the most wonderful person in the world. I never thought I could love any one as I love him. And it's the same with him. But he wants me all to himself." Her hands fluttered together in nervous appeal. "Can't you see how it is? Since we've been married we've never been separated a day. And now this South-American thing has come up, and he's felt—oh, I can't explain. But I'm so afraid——"

"Afraid of what?"

"It's hard to put into words," she said hopelessly. "I suppose I'm afraid of losing my happiness. Oliver's right in many ways. He never does have me to himself; I belong to so many people. It's always been my life, you know. But I thought I could combine everything when I married, and I'm beginning to see that it can't be done."

"He knew what your life was," said David.

"Does one ever know?" she said sadly. "This concert, you see, is my first important appearance since our marriage. And then my going away right after——"

David strode over to the piano and sat there silent, his head sunk on his chest, his short arms stiffly before him.

"I realize how absurd it is," she murmured; "but it isn't

just those few months. He trusts me. It's the feeling he has that this is only a beginning. I know what he means so well," she ended helplessly. David's short fingers moved over the keys. A music wild and pagan rose up, filled the room with rhythms of free dancing creatures, sank to a minor plaint, and broke off on a harsh discord as the door-bell jangled.

"There's your Oliver," he said, and went to let him in.

It was the day of the concert, and Myra wanted above all to be alone. She had never felt this way before. She dreaded the evening, dreaded facing a critical audience; she had fretted herself into a fever over it. But when she tried to explain her state of mind to Oliver that morning at breakfast, he would not hear of any prescription for nerves which did not include his company. Why should she want to be alone? If she was ill or troubled, his place was beside her. He had planned to lunch and spend the afternoon with her. Her faintly irritable "I wish you wouldn't," only wounded and shocked him. Her strength was not equal to discussion, and in the end she yielded.

For the rest of the morning he followed her about, tenderly opposing any exertion.

"I must have you at your best to-night, dear," he kept on saying. "I'm going to be proud of my Myra." He was so eager, wistful, and loving, she could not resent his care. She gave in to it with a sense of helplessness.

Soon after lunch her head started aching. She suggested a brisk walk. The air might do her good. But he persuaded her to lie down on the couch instead. The touch of his fingers on her hot forehead was soothing, too soothing. She relaxed luxuriously, closing her eyes, subdued, indifferent.

He was saying:

"What will you do, beloved, if you are taken ill in South America? No Oliver to care for you. I can't bear to think of it." Suddenly, he laid his cheek against hers. "If anything happens to you, I shall go mad."

She sat up with a swift movement that brought back an almost intolerable pain.

"Nothing will happen," she tried to say, and found herself weakly sobbing in his arms.

It was time to dress. She did her hair, to please Oliver, in a girlish way, parted and knotted low. Her gown, designed by Martigues, did not fit in with this simple coiffure. She was aware of an incongruity between the smooth, yellow bands of hair meekly confining her small head, and the daring peacock-blue draperies flowing in long, free lines from her shoulders, held lightly in at the waist by a golden cord.

"One will get the better of the other before the evening is over," she thought with a sigh, turning away from her mirror.

"My beautiful Myra!" Oliver said as if to cheer her.

"I have never looked worse," she retorted a trifle impatiently, and would not argue the point as they drove up town.

"We'll see what I really amount to now," she told herself.

She had never before so tensely faced an audience, but there was more at stake than she cared to confess, and she was not equal to it. She shone, but did not blind those thousand eyes; she sang but did not cast enchantment. And David Cannon would not help her. He sat at the piano, uncouth, impassive, deliberately detached, as if he gave her and his music over to an anonymous crowd of whose existence he was hardly aware. There was something huge and static about him, something elemental as an earth-shape, containing in and by itself mysterious rhythms. His songs were things of faun-like humours, terrible, tender, mocking, compassionate. They called for an entire abandon, for witchery, for passion swayed and swaying; but although at times Myra's voice held a Pan-like flutiness, although an occasional note true and sweet as a mate-call stirred that dark fronting mass, she failed to sustain the spell. She was too aware of Oliver leaning forward in his box, applauding louder than any one. His loyalty would force out of this fastidious audience an ovation she did not deserve. She would not look his way. "I can't sing," she thought mournfully.

Had David Cannon shown any annoyance, she might have been goaded on to a supreme effort; but he avoided her. When once she went up to him during an intermission and said timidly:

"I'm sorry, David; I'm spoiling everything," he answered indifferently:

"My songs can stand it."

She wished then that she had not begged Oliver to keep away from her until the end. She felt lonely and near to tears. As the evening wore on, lightened by spasmodic applause, she became very quiet. She even sang better, and felt rather than saw Oliver brighten. But it was too late; she had lost her audience. There were now gaps in the earlier unbroken rows; a well-known critic trod softly out; little nervous coughs and rustlings rose up.

At last it was all over. She wanted only to hide, but she was not to escape another ordeal. She and Oliver had arranged for a supper party that evening. To it they had bidden many musical personalities and several of Oliver's architect friends. She had meant to announce then the South-American recitals. The prospect of such an entertainment was now almost unendurable. She knew well what these people would say and think. Driving home with Oliver, she relaxed limp against his shoulder, her eyes closed. That haven could at least always be counted on, she reflected with passionate gratitude. His voice sounded from a distance as he talked on and on, explaining, excusing, what he could not honestly ignore. She had worked too hard. She was tired out. There was the headache, too. But she had sung wonderfully all the same.

"Please, Oliver!" she faintly interrupted.

"You made the best of it," he insisted. "David's songs, though, are beyond me."

She sat up very straight at this.

"My dear," she said in a cold voice, "I made a mess of it, and you know it. There is no excuse. David has every reason to be furious."

"I'd like to see him dare——"

"Please, Oliver!" she said again on a warning note of hysteria. She stared out of the window at the blur of passing lights. It was misting; the streets gleamed wet and wan beneath the lamps.

Oliver's arm went around her.

"I'm sorry, dear. Nothing matters, after all, but you and I together," he whispered.

"Nothing else does matter, does it?" she cried suddenly. "Love me a great deal, Oliver, a great, great deal. That's all I ask."

They drove on in silence for a while. She sat very quiet, her face half hidden in the high fur collar of her cloak. Now and then she glanced at Oliver, her eyes wistful.

"Oliver," she said at last, "would it make any difference to you if I never sang again?"

"Never sang again," he echoed. "I don't understand."

"I want you and my home," came from her slowly. "I've been wondering for some time how much my singing really meant to me. To-night I think I've found out. I can't seem to keep everything I started out with and be happy. I'm not big enough," she added sadly.

He was startled, incredulous.

"Myra, you don't realize what you're saying. You're tired to-night. I could not let you give up your singing. You are an artist, a big artist."

She shook her head and sighed.

"I might have been, perhaps; but no, I'm not. David could tell you that. He knows."

"It's been my fault, then, if you feel this way," he said in a melancholy voice. "I've been selfish and stupid."

The taxi slowed down before the red-brick entrance of the apartment house. She put her hand impulsively on his arm.

"Oliver, promise me something."

"Whatever you ask."

"Don't mention South America to any one. You promise?"

"But, Myra——"

"Promise."

"I won't, then. But——"

"I see Walter Mason and Martigues waiting for us," she said quickly. "Remember, not a word." She was out of the cab, hurrying forward to greet her guests. Oliver followed, his eyes mutely pleading. But she seemed her old self again, graciously animated, laughing at Martigues, who sulked because he did not like the way her hair was done.

Soon other guests arrived, and still others, all of them primed with compliments carefully prepared.

Last of all came David Cannon, who brushed away flattery with curt gestures and grunts. He sat heavily down in a corner of the room, a plate of cheese sandwiches and a

frosted glass of beer before him, and turned an unsociable eye on all intruders. Myra, knowing his mood, left him alone.

"You are different to-night," Martigues whispered to her. "There is something I do not understand. You have the Madonna smile."

"I am happy," she said, and her eyes turned to Oliver, who held the look and gave it back with deeper meaning.

When later Martigues asked her to sing, she glanced again at Oliver, who nodded and smiled.

"If David will accompany me," she said then. David left sandwiches and beer but without enthusiasm. He crossed over to the piano, and peered up at her with a kind of sombre malice.

"So you will sing now," he said. "Will this do?" He played a few notes softly, and she nodded with a little smile.

It was a song about the love of a white-throated sparrow for a birch-tree of the North. All summer long the bird lived on the topmost branch and sang most beautifully. The season of southward journey came, but the white throated sparrow would not leave her tree. She stayed on alone, singing while the leaves turned gold and fell. She sang more faintly as the land grew white with the first snows and when she could sing no longer for the cold, she nestled down in a bare hollow of the white tree and let the driving flakes of the North cover her.

Oliver stood near the piano. Myra sang to and for him. She stood very tall and straight, her hair, loosened from its tight bands, soft around her face. Her voice thrilled out in the mate-call, grew fainter and sweeter as winter came on, grew poignant under the cold, quivered on the last note. As David Cannon ended with the fate theme of the tree, a genuine shiver went through the little group. There was no hesitation this time in the applause. They swept forward, surrounding her, begging her to sing again. But it was to Oliver that she turned.

"It pleased you? I'm glad."

David Cannon said nothing. He sat, his shoulders hunched, his fingers on the keys until she had refused to sing again.

"I didn't think you would," he said then, and abruptly left his post to go back to beer and sandwiches. Soon after he slipped out. Myra went with him to the hall, where they talked for a while in low voices. When she came back into the room she was smiling serenely.

She and Oliver were alone at last.

"You glorious creature!" he cried. "I'm so proud of you! Everyone was crazy about the way you sang." She walked slowly toward him.

"Oliver," she said, "I told David this evening that I wouldn't go to South America with him."

"You didn't!" His voice rose sharp and shocked.

She nodded, beaming almost mischievously.

"But I did, and nothing will make me change my mind."

"How could you be so impulsive, so foolish!" he cried.

She was looking at him now more soberly.

"Aren't you glad?"

"Myra, you mustn't! I'll telephone David at once. . . I'll —you did this for me. I won't have it. You should have asked me——"

"It's no use; I'm not going," she said.

He dropped on the couch and hid his face in his hands.

"You're giving this up because of me."

She went to him.

"Oliver, look at me."

Slowly he raised his head.

"I don't see why——" he began, but she was so beautiful, so radiant, that he caught his breath and faltered.

She sat down beside him.

"Ah, but you will," she said. "It's very simple, dear. Even David understands."

"What does he think?"

"He thinks as I do," she said quickly. "He was quite relieved; honestly, dear. He didn't want any homesick woman spoiling his songs for him in South America. And then I suggested Frances Maury in my place. She has a lovely voice, and she'll jump at the chance."

"I've never heard her, but I'm sure she can't sing as well as you," he said, with returning gloom. "And it was only for two months."

She laughed as at an unreasonable child.

"It isn't the two months, dear. It's our whole life. There would be other partings, you see, other interests drawing me away. And if it became easier to leave you, then I should know that everything was wrong between us; but if it kept on being hard to divide myself between you and my work, then my work would suffer and so would you. Either way, it couldn't go on. I'm not big enough to do both," she said.

"I can't accept such a sacrifice."

"Don't you want me with you always?"

He seized her hands and passionately drew her close to him.

"Want you? I can tell you now. I've been jealous, terribly so, of everyone, everything that touched you."

"I knew it," she said. "That's one reason why I didn't sing well to-night. Now I'm free"—she threw her arms out with the gesture of flying—"I'm free to love just you. We'll start another life, Oliver, a life of our own. We'll be fire-side people, dear, homely lovers content to sit and talk of an evening. You'll find me very valuable, really, as a partner," she said eagerly. "I've never been near enough to your work. And it's such wonderful work!" With an impulsive movement she went over and closed the piano. "I'll only open it when you ask me to," she said.

The process of elimination was simple enough. There was a touch of melancholy in Myra's measurement of relationships, in her consciousness of their frailty. People fell away easily, leaving her and Oliver to their chosen isolation. A dozen regrets or so to invitations, a week or two of evasions over the telephone, a few friends like Martigues turned away at the door when obviously she was at home, a refusal to sing at a charity concert and, most conclusive of all, David Cannon's advertised departure with another artist, and the thing was virtually done.

Then came a succession of long intimate evenings, she and Oliver left to their caprice, she and Oliver walking and driving together, wandering where their fancy took them in the springtime of city and country. She laughed sometimes at him, he seemed so dazed by the consciousness of utter possession. "You are sure you are not bored, darling?" he would often ask these first days. She could not reassure him enough; could not find ways enough to prove to him that

when a woman like herself gave of body, mind, and spirit, it was a full giving. There was exquisite pain in that giving; it was almost a terrifying thing. She was a vital creature, and must spend that which was hers, wisely or foolishly. Her ceaseless energy had always before found an outlet in her work. Now her only expression lay in Oliver. Her mind, never at rest, seized upon his working life, made it hers. But she soon learned that he regarded her self-appointed post of partner with a tender condescension edged with intolerance. She learned with a tiny shock that although in matters musical he trusted absolutely to her judgment, he did not consider the feminine intellect as equal to his own. Music, she discovered, had always been defined by him as something feminine in its application to the arts.

She became gradually aware that he objected to her visits to his office. His glance did not brighten at her entrance. He was not amused as he had been at first, when she bent over the sketches or ran her slim fingers along the tracery of blue prints, daring to question them. Sometimes she had a feeling that she did not entirely know Oliver; that there were plans of his, thoughts of his, which she did not share. She had not missed these before when her own life was full. She had time now during their long hours together to observe reactions of the cause of which she knew nothing. He was absent-minded, off on a trail that led away from her.

There came a week when he allowed her the brunt of wooing; a new dress failed to bring forth the usual compliment; a question lay unanswered where in pride she left it. Then one morning with a new crisp note in his voice, he telephoned, telling her that he must meet a man at his club for dinner that evening. Mechanically she answered, dully heard his voice warm to a sweetness that should have comforted her.

"You know I wouldn't leave you unless it were important, dearest. I can't explain now, but I may have great news for you when I come home."

She hung up the receiver thoughtfully, and turned to an apartment which seemed suddenly dreary and empty. She had no purpose in her day. The twilight hour loomed in prospect an endless, dusky loneliness. For a moment she thought of ringing him up and proposing to meet him down-

town for lunch; then restrained the impulse. Was she to turn into a nagging wife! She longed now for some friend with whom she could spend the day; but she could think of none. Since her marriage with Oliver she had not encouraged intimacies. On his account she had estranged the few women to whom she might now have turned. Oliver had never understood friendships among women.

The day dragged by. For the first time in months she found herself wishing that she was going out that evening. She thought almost guiltily of David Cannon and Frances Maury, imagining herself in Frances's place. She went to the piano, tried to sing, and realized with dismay that she was sadly out of practice. After all, what did it matter? she decided moodily. Oliver rarely asked her for music.

She took up a novel and dozed over it.

At eleven o'clock Oliver came home. She knew by the way he opened the front door that the news was good. She ran to meet him; her dullness vanished.

He took her by the hand and led her into the softly lit room which seemed suddenly warm again with his presence. Then he whirled her, facing him. Her smile was a happy reflection of his own brightness.

"You'll never guess what's happened," he began.

"Tell me quickly!" she begged.

He waited a moment, with an eye to dramatic effect.

"Well, then," he said proudly, "I've been appointed on a special committee of reconstruction in France. Malcolm Wild—you've heard me speak of him—came down from Washington to-day to propose it to me. There are six of us on the committee, and I'm the youngest."

"Oliver!" She put into the exclamation something of what he expected, for he seemed satisfied. He lifted his head with a young, triumphant gesture. "It is my chance to do a great and useful work," he said. "I needn't tell you what it means. I never hoped, I never dreamed of such an honour."

"I'm so proud of you!" she cried.

He hardly seemed to hear her.

"Think of it, just think of it—to be invited to go over there with five of the biggest architects here, American money backing us! We've been given a whole section to rebuild;

I forget how many villages. It's like a dream." He passed his hand over his eyes.

"France!" she heard herself saying. "But, Oliver, it's the work of months."

He nodded happily.

"That's what it is."

"France!" she murmured in a kind of ecstasy. "I'm just getting it." She clasped her hands together. "I've always wanted to be in France with you. My dear, when do we start?"

He gave her a swift, bewildered look.

"Why, Myra, didn't you understand? I can't take you right away with me. Later, of course, you'll join me. It won't be long; a few months at most."

"I'm not to go when you go?"

Her voice, low and strained, drove straight to his heart.

"Myra, I never thought—it's a man's trip just now, darling. I—couldn't take you with me," he stammered miserably. "Passports are almost impossible to get; and then conditions over there——"

She backed away from him, her arms stiff at her sides. "When were you—planning to go?"

He stared at her pitifully.

"Beloved, don't look at me that way!"

"When were you planning to go?" she repeated.

"Next week," he said in an altered voice. "I never thought you would take it this way. I never thought—it's a great chance."

"That's what I once told you," she said slowly, and turned away that he might not see her face. "Don't touch me!" she cried as he came nearer. "Don't! I've been nervous all day, and lonely." She tried to control herself, but as his arms went around her, she began to sob like a hurt child. "If you leave me, I shall die. I can't bear it. I know it's wicked of me." Her words reached him brokenly. "It's only because you're all I have. I've given up everything; and now——"

He stood very still, staring into space, his hold on her never loosening. She stumbled on, confessing what had lain hidden in her heart until this moment. She told him things she had never thought she could betray to any one—things

she had never even dared formulate. When she had done, he said in a strange, gentle voice:

"I didn't know you depended so on me. But it's all right; I won't leave you, ever. It's all right. There, dear, I understand."

She struggled free from his hold, and dried her eyes with a sudden passionate gesture of scattering tears.

"You shall go," she said fiercely. "I hate myself for acting this way. It was only because——" She could get no further.

He did not attempt to touch her again. They stood facing one another, measuring their love.

"I might go," he said at last, as if to himself; "but in going I should spoil something very precious. You deny it now, but you would remember your own sacrifice. And then, of course, you would go back to your work. I should want you to. But it would never be the same again, never."

"I won't go back."

He shook his head.

"If you didn't, you would never forgive me. Every day you spent here alone and idle would break one of those fragile bonds that hold us so closely. If only you hadn't given up South America!"

"I was wrong," she said drearily.

At last he held out his arms.

"Myra," he said, "you mean more than anything else to me. This offer pleased me; I admit it. But I can work on just as well here. I have the Cromwell house, you know, and the Newburghs may build soon. Don't let's think of it again."

She held back a moment, afraid to yield; but there was no resisting her longing, and she ran to him with a little sigh, which he softly echoed as he took her and held her close.

They had vowed to live only for one another. The theme of their love was sublime enough, but the instruments were fallible. Human beings can rarely sustain a lofty note beyond the measure of a supreme moment. Emotional as she was in her gratitude, Myra would have kept on sounding that note through the days and nights. She would not allow Oliver to forget what he had given up for her sake.

More than ever she sought to associate herself with his work. He was forced to recognize her personality there. For when skilfully she led the talk on his plans, she hunted down elusive problems, grappled with them, and offered him the solutions of a sure instinct. She did not reckon with his vanity. She was too eager to make up for a lost opportunity, as she too often explained. He came gradually to brood over what he now consented to consider a sacrifice. In passing moments of irritation he even referred to it. He broke out occasionally in fits of nerves, certain that he would be humoured and petted back to the normal. He knew well how a frown dismayed her, how deep a word could strike, what tiny wounds he could inflict. It would seem sometimes as if one or the other deliberately created a short, violent scene over a trivial difference just to relieve routine. The domestic lowlands stretched beyond the eye. He missed the broken country, the unexpected dips and curves of the unknown. Not that his heart went adventuring. He was faithful in body and spirit, but there was discontent in the looks he turned on her.

One afternoon she read in the papers that David Cannon and Frances Maury were back from South America after a triumphant series of recitals. They were to give a concert the following month. Her indifference to the news, she thought drearily, was an indication of how far she had travelled away from her old life. She did not even want to see David Cannon.

It was Oliver who brought up the subject that evening.

"David's back. If you'd been with him, how excited I should have felt to-day!" he remarked. "Odd, isn't it?"

"You would have been in France," she reminded him.

They sat on in silence for a while.

He laid his book aside with a sudden brisk movement.

"Myra, why don't you sing again?"

"For you, to-night?"

"I mean professionally," he blurted out.

She drifted across the room to a shadowy corner.

"I don't know," she said rather flatly, bending over a bowl of white roses. "I suppose I don't feel like it any more. It's hard to take things up again."

He fingered his book; then, as if despite himself, he said:

"I'm afraid, dear, that we're letting ourselves grow old." She swung sharply about, catching her breath.

"You mean I am?"

"Both of us." He was cautious, tender even, but she was not deceived. It was almost a relief that he had spoken.

"Tell me, dear," she said from her corner. "You're bored, aren't you? Oh, not with me"—she forestalled his protest—"but just plain bored. Isn't it so?" Her voice was deceptively quiet.

He stirred in his chair, fidgeted under the direct attack, and decided not to evade it.

"I think we've been buried long enough," he finally confessed. "I love our evenings together, of course; but a little change now and then might be agreeable. Perhaps it isn't a good thing for two people to be thrown entirely on each other's company. And I've been wondering, dear"—he hesitated, carefully picking his words—"I've been wondering if you would not be happier if you had other interests—interests of your own."

"Suppose I don't want any?" She did not give this out as a challenge, but he frowned a trifle impatiently.

"I can't believe it possible," he said. "Have you lost all touch with the world?"

She came slowly forward into the warm circle of light.

"I don't seem to care for people and things as I used to. Look at me. I'm not the same Myra."

She stared at him with a deep, searching expression, and what she saw drew her up with a sudden movement of decision. Her voice, when next she spoke, was lighter, more animated.

"You're right, dear. We're growing poky. I tell you what we'll do," she continued in a playful manner. Her lips smiled, and her eyes watched as she knelt beside him, her head tilted, her fingers straying over the rough surface of his coat. He never dressed for dinner in these days. "We'll give a party, shall we?" she said. "And then everyone will know that we're still—alive."

If she had wanted to test his state of mind, she could not have found a better way. Instantly he was all eagerness. Nothing would do but that they should plan the party at once, set the date, make out a list of friends to be invited.

She was ready with pad and pencil and her old address-book, which had lain for many days untouched in her desk.

"Shall we have Frances Maury?" she suggested. "She'll remind you of me as I was before we married."

"What a gorgeous little devil you were!" he murmured reminiscently.

She wished he had not said that. Yet how absurd it was to be jealous of oneself!

Well, they would entertain again, since it pleased him. But she had lost her social instinct. This party seemed a great enterprise. She had to pretend to an enthusiasm which she did not really feel. "Am I growing old?" she wondered more than once. She had to confess to a panic of shyness when she thought of herself as hostess. That was all she would be this time. Frances Maury held the rôle of prima donna.

There were no regrets to her invitations. They came, these old friends and acquaintances, with familiar voices and gestures. They seemed genuinely glad to see her, but they did not spare her. She had grown a little stouter, had she not? Ah, well happy people risked that. And they did not need to be told how happy she was. In quite an old-fashioned way, too. Myra domesticated—how quaint that was! Did she sing any more? No? What a pity!

Her rooms had lain quiet too long. So much noise deafened her. She was suddenly aware that she *had* grown stouter. Her new gown, made for the occasion, should have been more cleverly designed. Martigues as much as told her so. She had, also, lost the power of attraction. She could not hold people's attention as she used to. She was sensitively aware of how readily one and the other drifted away after a few words. Had she not been hostess, she would often have found herself alone.

David Cannon and Miss Maury came late. Frances was fond of dramatic entrances; she had the stage sense. Myra hurried forward, aware, as she did so, that her greeting held a maternal note; that Cannon was looking through and through her with those small, relentless eyes of his. Then Oliver came up, and from the corner of her eyes she saw Frances attach herself to him. She had known that would happen.

Frances Maury was indeed a lovely creature, vivid, electric, swift, and free of movement, mellow of voice. She was like a bell. Touch her and she chimed. Oliver on one side, Martigues on the other, she made her vivacious way through the room, and was soon surrounded. Very prettily she moved her court toward Myra, drew Myra into the circle of her warmth with a gracious friendliness.

Martigues, in raptures, explained that it was he who had designed the very modern jewel she wore, a moonstone set in silver. "Isn't she adorable!" he kept on repeating.

Oliver had bent over to look at this ornament and was fingering it, his dark head close to hers. She whispered to him, and he whispered back. They were already on the best of terms.

David Cannon trod up to Myra.

"What do you think of her?" he asked abruptly. "Her high notes are not as fine as yours were, but she is improving. If she doesn't fall in love, I shall make something of her." He frowned at Oliver.

Myra flushed.

"She seems very clever," was all she could manage.

"I'll make her sing," said Cannon, and elbowed a path to her side. She pouted a little, declared she could never resist him, and moved to the piano.

Myra drew a short breath. She herself had not intended to sing, but she had hoped that Oliver or David would give her a chance to refuse. She did not feel angry or envious of this girl, she was incapable of pettiness; but she felt old and dull and lonely. Her trained smile was her only shield. She held it while Frances Maury sang. She did not look at Oliver, but his delight reached her as if she had caused it. She felt him hovering close to the piano. She knew how he was standing, how his eyes were shining. She knew, because as the warm, rich voice rose up, as Cannon's strange rhythms filled the room with a wild pagan grace, she withdrew into her memory and found there all that went on. She herself was singing; she stood free and beautiful before them all; she met Oliver's eyes.

Frances sang again and again. Oliver led the applause, and Myra sat on, smiling, her steady gaze turned inward. When it was over, she took Frances by the hand, and it

was as if she were thanking herself and bidding that self adieu.

Later in the evening David Cannon came up to her and gruffly suggested that she sing.

She shook her head.

"No, my good friend."

"Why not?" He stood over her, ugly, masterful.

Her smile softened to a sweet, sad flutter of lip.

"You know why."

"Nonsense!"

"You can't bully me any more, David," she told him gently. "That's the tragic part of it," she added under her breath. She liked David, but she wished he would go. She wished they would all go. It must be very late.

It was still later, however, before the last guest departed. That last guest was Frances Maury, escorted by a glum David. Oliver had kept her on.

"Myra and I always get to bed so early that it's a relief to stay up for once," he had said.

"Of course it's much more sensible to go to bed early." Miss Maury's voice did not sound as if sensible things appealed to her.

"Oliver has to be at his office so early in the morning," Myra put in almost as an apology.

"She sees to that," came from Oliver, with a humorous inflection.

Frances Maury playfully shuddered.

"Wives have too many duties for me. I shall never marry."

"Don't," said Oliver, and realized his blunder. He glanced quickly at Myra, and was relieved to observe that she did not seem troubled.

It was David, at last, who insisted on going home. Frances obeyed him with a laughing apology.

"You've given me such a good time. I forgot the hour. May I come again?"

"Indeed you must," Myra answered hospitably.

She would not leave, however, until they had promised to come to her concert. She would send them tickets. And they must have tea with her soon. Would they chaperon her once in a while? Oliver eagerly promised to be at her

beck and call. He followed her out into the hall, unmindful of David's vile temper.

Myra turned slowly back into the room, noting with jaded eyes the empty beer-bottles, crusts of sandwiches, ashes on the rugs, chairs pulled crazily about. The place still resounded with chatter and song. It no longer seemed her home.

Presently Oliver joined her.

"Well, I enjoyed that," he said with a boyish ring. "Come, now, wasn't it jolly to see people again? Everyone had a wonderful time." He hummed as he walked lightly over to the table and helped himself to a cigarette.

She dropped on the couch.

"I'm a little tired."

He lit his cigarette, staring at her over the tiny flame of the match before he blew it out.

"Why, I never noticed. You do look all in."

She straightened with an effort, put a hand to her hair.

"I'm afraid I've lost the habit."

"You'll have to get it again," he said happily. "We're going to give lots of parties. It's good for my business, too. Walter Mason brought a man here to-night who is thinking of building a house on Long Island. Walter tells me he went away quite won over."

She was all interest at once.

"Why didn't you tell me? I might have made a special effort to be nice to him."

"Oh, he had a good time," he said carelessly. "I say, Myra, your friend Miss Maury is fascinating. Sings divinely." He moved over to the couch and sat on the edge of it, absent-mindedly toying with her hand.

"She's very lovely," Myra agreed.

"Why didn't you sing?" he suddenly asked.

"I didn't need to." The little smile was back, fastened to her lips. A certain unfamiliar embarrassment fell between them. She made no effort to dissipate it.

He yawned.

"Well, you should have. Heavens! it's late! Two o'clock. I'm off to bed." He kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"I'll be along in a moment," she said.

She heard him humming in the next room, heard him mov-

ing about, heard the bump of his shoes on the floor. She lay, her eyes closed. Presently she got up, went to the piano and let her fingers wander over the keys. Then she began to sing softly. Her fine critical faculties were awake. She listened while she sang—listened as if some one else would rise or fall on her verdict. There was a curious lack of vibrancy in her notes. They did not come from the heart.

Suddenly she stopped. Oliver was calling "Myra."

She thrilled with a swift hope that brought her to her feet, flushed and tremulous.

"Aren't you coming to bed soon? It's too late for music," drifted faintly querulous down the hall.

The light went out of her face.

"I'm coming." A leaden weariness was over her. Slowly she closed the piano.

He was already asleep when she tiptoed into the room. She stood a moment staring down at him.

"The worst of it is that I shall sleep, too," she thought.

BUTTERFLIES

BY ROSE SIDNEY

From *The Pictorial Review*

THE wind rose in a sharp gust, rattling the insecure windows and sighing forlornly about the corners of the house. The door unlatched itself, swung inward hesitatingly, and hung wavering for a moment on its sagging hinges. A formless cloud of gray fog blew into the warm, steamy room. But whatever ghostly visitant had paused upon the threshold, he had evidently decided not to enter, for the catch snapped shut with a quick, passionate vigour. The echo of the slamming door rang eerily through the house.

Mart Brenner's wife laid down the ladle with which she had been stirring the contents of a pot that was simmering on the big, black stove, and, dragging her crippled foot behind her, she hobbled heavily to the door.

As she opened it a new horde of fog-wraiths blew in. The world was a gray, wet blanket. Not a light from the village below pierced the mist, and the lonely army of tall cedars on the black hill back of the house was hidden completely.

"Who's there?" Mrs. Brenner hailed. But her voice fell flat and muffled. Far off on the beach she could dimly hear the long wail of a fog-horn.

The faint throb of hope stilled in her breast. She had not really expected to find any one at the door unless perhaps it should be a stranger who had missed his way at the cross-roads. There had been one earlier in the afternoon when the fog first came. But her husband had been at home then and his surly manner quickly cut short the stranger's attempts at friendliness. This ugly way of Mart's had isolated them from all village intercourse early in their life on Cedar Hill.

Like a buzzard's nest their home hung over the village on

the unfriendly sides of the bleak slope. Visitors were few and always reluctant, even strangers, for the village told weird tales of Mart Brenner and his kin. The village said that he—and all those who belonged to him as well—were marked for evil and disaster. Disaster had truly written itself throughout their history. His mother was mad, a tragic madness of bloody prophecies and dim fears; his only son a witless creature of eighteen, who, for all his height and bulk, spent his days catching butterflies in the woods on the hill, and his nights in laboriously pinning them, wings outspread, upon the bare walls of the house.

The room where the Brenner family lived its queer, taciturn life was tapestried in gold, the glowing tapestry of swarms of outspread yellow butterflies sweeping in gilded tides from the rough floors to the black rafters overhead.

Olga Brenner herself was no less tragic than her family. On her face, written in the acid of pain, was the history of the blows and cruelty that had warped her active body. Because of her crippled foot, her entire left side sagged hopelessly and her arm swung away, above it, like a branch from a decayed tree. But more saddening than her distorted body was the lonely soul that looked out of her tired, faded eyes.

She was essentially a village woman with a profound love of its intimacies and gossip, its fence-corner neighbourliness. The horror with which the village regarded her, as the wife of Mart Brenner, was an eating sore. It was greater than the tragedy of her poor, witless son, the hatred of old Mrs. Brenner, and her ever-present fear of Mart. She had never quite given up her unreasoning hope that some day some one might come to the house in one of Mart's long, unexplained absences and sit down and talk with her over a cup of tea. She put away the feeble hope again as she turned back into the dim room and closed the door behind her.

"Must have been that bit of wind," she meditated. "It plays queer tricks sometimes."

She went to the mantel and lighted the dull lamp. By the flicker she read the face of the clock.

"Tobey's late!" she exclaimed uneasily. Her mind never rested from its fear for Tobey. His childlike mentality made him always the same burden as when she had rocked him hour after hour, a scrawny mite of a baby on her breast.

"It's a fearful night for him to be out!" she muttered.

"Blood! Blood!" said a tragic voice from a dark corner by the stove. Barely visible in the ruddy half-dark of the room a pair of demoniac eyes met hers.

Mrs. Brenner threw her shrivelled and wizened mother-in-law an angry and contemptuous glance.

"Be still!" she commanded. "'Pears to me that's all you ever say—blood!"

The glittering eyes fell away from hers in a sullen obedience. But the tragic voice went on intoning stubbornly, "Blood on his hands! Red! Dripping! I see blood!"

Mrs. Brenner shuddered. "Seems like you could shut up a spell!" she complained.

The old woman's voice trailed into a broken and fitful whispering. Olga's commands were the only laws she knew, and she obeyed them. Mrs. Brenner went back to the stove. But her eyes kept returning to the clock and thence to the darkening square of window where the fog pressed heavily into the very room.

Out of the gray silence came a shattering sound that sent the ladle crashing out of Mrs. Brenner's nerveless hand and brought a moan from the dozing old woman! It was a scream, a long, piercing scream, so intense, so agonized that it went echoing about the room as though a disembodied spirit were shrieking under the rafters! It was a scream of terror, an innocent, a heart-broken scream!

"Tobey!" cried Mrs. Brenner, her face rigid.

The old woman began to pick at her ragged skirt, mumbling, "Blood! Blood on his hands! I see it."

"That was on the hill," said Mrs. Brenner slowly, steadying her voice.

She put her calloused hand against her lips and stood listening with agonized intentness. But now the heavy, foggy silence had fallen again. At intervals came the long, faint wail of the fog-horn. There was no other sound. Even the old woman in the shadowy corner had ceased her mouth-ing.

Mrs. Brenner stood motionless, with her hand against her trembling lips, her head bent forward for four of the dull intervals between the siren-call.

Then there came the sound of steps stumbling around the

house. Mrs. Brenner, with her painful hobble, reached the door before the steps paused there, and threw it open.

The feeble light fell on the round, vacant face of her son, his inevitable pasteboard box, grimy with much handling, clutched close to his big breast, and in it the soft beating and thudding of imprisoned wings.

Mrs. Brenner's voice was scarcely more than a whisper, "Tobey!" but it rose shrilly as she cried, "Where you been? What was that scream?"

Tobey stumbled past her headlong into the house, muttering, "I'm cold!"

She shut the door and followed him to the stove, where he stood shaking himself and beating at his damp clothes with clumsy fingers.

"What was that scream?" she asked him tensely. She knotted her rough fingers as she waited for his answer.

"I dunno," he grunted sullenly. His thick lower lip shoved itself forward, baby-fashion.

"Where you been?" she persisted.

As he did not answer she coaxed him, "Aw, come on, Tobey. Tell Ma. Where you been?"

"I been catching butterflies," he answered. "I got a big one this time," with an air of triumph.

"Where was you when you heard the scream?" she asked him cunningly.

He gave a slow shake of his head. "I dunno," he answered in his dull voice.

A big shiver shook him. His teeth chattered and he crouched down on his knees before the open oven-door.

"I'm cold," he complained. Mrs. Brenner came close to him and laid her hand on his wet, matted hair. "Tobey's a bad boy," she scolded. "You mustn't go out in the wet like this. Your hair's soaked."

She got down stiffly on her lame knees. "Sit down," she ordered, "and I'll take off your shoes. They're as wet as a dish-rag."

"They're full of water, too," Tobey grumbled as he sprawled on the floor, sticking one big, awkward foot into her lap. "The water in there makes me cold."

"You spoil all your pa's shoes that a-way," said Mrs. Brenner, her head bent over her task. "He told you not to go

round in the wet with 'em any more. He'll give you a lashing if he comes in and sees your shoes. I'll have to try and get 'em dry before he comes home. Anyways," with a breath of deep relief, "I'm glad it ain't that red clay from the hill. That never comes off."

The boy paid no attention to her. He was investigating the contents of his box, poking a fat, dirty forefinger around among its fluttering contents. There was a flash of yellow wings, and with a crow of triumph the boy shut the lid.

"The big one's just more than flapping," he chuckled. "I had an awful hard time to catch him. I had to run and run. Look at him, Ma," the boy urged. She shook her head.

"I ain't got the time," she said, almost roughly. "I got to get these shoes off'n you afore your father gets home, Tobey, or you'll get a awful hiding. Like as not you'll get it anyways, if he's mad. Better get into bed."

"Naw!" Tobey protested. "I seen Pa already. I want my supper out here! I don't want to go to bed!"

Mrs. Brenner paused. "Where was Pa?" she asked.

But Tobey's stretch of coherent thinking was past. "I dunno!" he muttered.

Mrs. Brenner sighed. She pulled off the sticky shoes and rose stiffly.

"Go get in bed," she said.

"Aw, Ma, I want to stay up with my butterflies," the boy pleaded. Two big tears rolled down his fat cheeks. In his queer, clouded world he had learned one certain fact. He could almost always move his mother with tears.

But this time she was firm. "Do as I told you!" she ordered him. "Mebbe if you're in bed your father won't be thinking about you. And I'll try to dry these shoes afore he thinks about them." She took the grimy box from his resisting fingers, and, holding it in one hand, pulled him to his feet and pushed him off to his bedroom.

When she had closed the door on his wail she returned and laid the box on the shelf. Then she hurried to gather up the shoes. Something on her hand as she put it out for the sodden shoes caught her eye and she straightened, holding her hand up where the feeble light from the shelf caught it.

"I've cut myself," she said aloud. "There's blood on my hand. It must 'a' been on those lacings of Tobey's."

The old woman in the corner roused. "Blood!" she screeched. "Olga! Blood on his hands!"

Mrs. Brenner jumped. "You old screech-owl!" she cried. She wiped her hand quickly on her dirty apron and held it up again to see the cut. But there was no cut on her hand! Where had that blood come from? From Tobey's shoes?

And who was it that had screamed on the hill? She felt herself enwrapped in a mist of puzzling doubts.

She snatched up the shoes, searching them with agonized eyes. But the wet and pulpy mass had no stain. Only the wet sands and the slimy water-weeds of the beach clung to them.

Then where had the blood come from? It was at this instant that she became conscious of shouts on the hillside. She limped to the door and held it open a crack. Very faintly she could see the bobbing lights of torches. A voice carried down to her.

"Here's where I found his hat. That's why I turned off back of these trees. And right there I found his body!"

"Are you sure he's dead?" quavered another voice.

"Stone-dead!"

Olga Brenner shut the door. But she did not leave it immediately. She stood leaning against it, clutching the wet shoes, her staring eyes glazing.

Tobey was strong. He had flown into childish rages sometimes and had hurt her with his undisciplined strength. Where was Mart? Tobey had seen him. Perhaps they had fought. Her mind refused to go further. But little subtle undercurrents pressed in on her. Tobey hated and feared his father. And Mart was always enraged at the sight of his half-witted son. What *had* happened? And yet no matter what had occurred, Tobey had not been on the hill. His shoes bore mute testimony to that. And the scream had been on the slope. She frowned.

Her body more bent than ever, she hobbled slowly over to the stove and laid the shoes on the big shelf above it, spreading them out to the rising heat. She had barely arranged them when there was again the sound of approaching footsteps. These feet, however, did not stumble. They were

heavy and certain. Mrs. Brënnér snatched at the shoes, gathered them up, and turned to run. But one of the lacings caught on a nail on the shelf. She jerked desperately at the nail, and the jerking loosened her hold of both the shoes. With a clatter they fell at her feet.

In that moment Mart Brenner stood in the doorway. Poverty, avarice, and evil passions had minted Mart Brenner like a devil's coin. His shaggy head lowered in his powerful shoulders. His long arms, apeline, hung almost to his knees. Behind him the fog pressed in, and his rough, bristly hair was beaded with diamonds of moisture.

"Well?" he snapped. A sardonic smile twisted his face. "Caught you, didn't I?"

He strode forward. His wife shrank back, but even in her shivering terror she noticed, as one notices small details in a time of peril, that his shoes were caked with red mud and that his every step left a wet track on the rough floor.

"He didn't do 'em no harm," she babbled. "They're just wet. Please, Mart, they ain't harmed a mite. Just wet. That's all. Tobey went on the beach with 'em. It won't take but a little spell to dry 'em."

Her husband stooped and snatched up the shoes. She shrank into herself, waiting the inevitable torrent of his passion and the probable blow. Instead, as he stood up he was smiling. Bewildered, she stared at him in a dull silence.

"No harm done," he said, almost amiably. Shaking with relief, she stretched out her hand.

"I'll dry 'em," she said. "Give me your shoes and I'll get the mud off."

Her husband shook his head. He was still smiling.

"Don't need to dry 'em. I'll put 'em away," he replied, and, still tracking his wet mud, he went into Tobey's room.

Her fear flowed into another channel. She dreaded her husband in his black rages, but she feared him more now in his unusual amiability. Perhaps he would strike Tobey when he saw him. She strained her ears to listen.

A long silence followed his exit. But there was no outcry from Tobey, no muttering nor blows. After a few moments, moving quickly, her husband came out. She raised her heavy eyes to stare at him. He stopped and looked intently at his own muddy tracks.

"I'll get a rag and wipe up the mud right off."

As she started toward the nail where the rag hung, her husband put out a long arm and detained her. "Leave it be," he said. He smiled again.

She noticed, then, that he had removed his muddy shoes and wore the wet ones. He had fully laced them, and she had almost a compassionate moment as she thought how wet and cold his feet must be.

"You can put your feet in the oven, Mart, to dry 'em."

Close on her words she heard the sound of footsteps and a sharp knock followed on the sagging door. Mart Brenner sat down on a chair close to the stove and lifted one foot into the oven. "See who's there!" he ordered.

She opened the door and peered out. A group of men stood on the step, the faint light of the room picking out face after face that she recognized—Sheriff Munn; Jim Barker, who kept the grocery in the village; Cottrell Hampstead, who lived in the next house below them; young Dick Roamer, Munn's deputy; and several strangers.

"Well?" she asked ungraciously.

"We want to see Brenner!" one of them said.

She stepped back. "Come in," she told them. They came in, pulling off their caps, and stood huddled in a group in the centre of the room.

Her husband reluctantly stood up.

"Evening!" he said, with his unusual smile. "Bad out, ain't it?"

"Yep!" Munn replied. "Heavy fog. We're soaked."

Olga Brenner's pitiful instinct of hospitality rose in her breast.

"I got some hot soup on the stove. Set a spell and I'll dish you some," she urged.

The men looked at each other in some uncertainty. After a moment Munn said, "All right, if it ain't too much bother, Mrs. Brenner."

"Not a bit," she cried eagerly. She bustled about, searching her meagre stock of chinaware for uncracked bowls.

"Set down?" suggested Mart.

Munn sat down with a sign, and his companions followed his example. Mart resumed his position before the stove, lifting one foot into the capacious black maw of the oven.

"Must 'a' got your feet wet, Brenner?" the sheriff said with heavy jocularly.

Brenner nodded, "You bet I did," he replied. "Been down on the beach all afternoon."

"Didn't happen to hear any unusual noise down there, did you?" Munn spoke with his eyes on Mrs. Brenner, at her task of ladling out the thick soup. She paused as though transfixed, her ladle poised in the air.

Munn's eyes dropped from her face to the floor. There they became fixed on the tracks of red clay.

"No, nothin' but the sea. It must be rough outside to-night, for the bay was whinin' like a sick cat," said Mart calmly.

"Didn't hear a scream, or nothing like that, I suppose?" Munn persisted.

"Couldn't hear a thing but the water. Why?"

"Oh—nothing," said Munn.

Mrs. Brenner finished pouring out the soup and set the bowls on the table.

Chairs clattered, and soon the men were eating. Mart finished his soup before the others and sat back smacking his lips. As Munn finished the last spoonful in his bowl he pulled out a wicked-looking black pipe, crammed it full of tobacco and lighted it.

Blowing out a big blue breath of the pleasant smoke, he inquired, "Been any strangers around to-day?"

Mart scratched his head. "Yeah. A man come by early this afternoon. He was aiming to climb the hill. I told him he'd better wait till the sun come out. I don't know whether he did or not."

"See anybody later—say about half an hour ago?"

Mart shook his head. "No. I come up from the beach and I didn't pass nobody."

The sheriff pulled on his pipe for a moment. "That boy of yours still catching butterflies?" he asked presently.

Mart scowled. He swung out a long arm toward the walls with their floods of butterflies. But he did not answer.

"Uh-huh!" said Munn, following the gesture with his quiet eyes. He puffed several times before he spoke again.

"What time did you come in, Brenner, from the beach?"

Mrs. Brenner closed her hands tightly, the interlaced fingers locking themselves.

"Oh, about forty minutes ago, I guess it was. Wasn't it, Olga?" Mart said carelessly.

"Yes." Her voice was a breath.

"Was your boy out to-day?"

Mart looked at his wife. "I dunno."

Munn's glance came to the wife.

"Yes."

"How long ago did he come in?"

"About an hour ago." Her voice was flat and lifeless.

"And where had he been?" Munn's tone was gentle but insistent.

Her terrified glance sought Mart's face. "He'd been on the beach!" she said in a defiant tone.

Mart continued to look at her, but there was no expression in his face. He still wore his peculiar affable smile.

"Where did these tracks come from, on the floor?"

Swift horror fastened itself on Mrs. Brenner.

"What's that to you?" she flared.

She heard her husband's hypocritical and soothing tones. "Now, now, Olga! That ain't the way to talk to these gentlemen. Tell them who made these tracks."

"You did!" she cried. All about her she could feel the smoothness of a falling trap.

Mart smiled still more broadly.

"Look here, Olga, don't get so warm over it. You're nervous now. Tell the gentlemen who made those tracks."

She turned to Munn desperately. "What do you want to know for?" she asked him.

The sharpness of her voice roused old Mrs. Brenner, drowsing in her corner.

"Blood!" she cried suddenly. "Blood on his hands!"

In the silence that followed, the eyes of the men turned curiously toward the old woman and then sought each other with speculative stares. Mrs. Brenner, tortured by those long significant glances, said roughly. "That's Mart's mother. She ain't right! What are you bothering us for?"

Dick Roamer put out a hand to plead for her, and tapped

Munn on the arm. There was something touching in her frightened old face.

"A man—a stranger was killed up on the hill," Munn told her.

"What's that got to do with us?" she countered.

"Not a thing, Mrs. Brenner, probably, but I've just to make sure where every man in the village was this afternoon."

Mrs. Brenner's lids flickered. She felt the questioning intentness of Sheriff Munn's eyes on her stolid face and she felt that he did not miss the tremor in her eyes.

"Where was your son this afternoon?"

She smiled defiance. "I told you, on the beach."

"Whose room is that?" Munn's forefinger pointed to Tobey's closed door.

"That's Tobey's room," said his mother.

"The mud tracks go into that room. Did he make those tracks, Mrs. Brenner?"

"No! Oh, no! No!" she cried desperately. "Mart made those when he came in. He went into Tobey's room!"

"How about it, Brenner?"

Mart smiled with an indulgent air. "Heard what she said, didn't you?"

"Is it true?"

Mart smiled more broadly. "Olga'll take my hair off if I don't agree with her," he said.

"Let's see your shoes, Brenner?"

Without hesitation Mart lifted one heavy boot and then the other for Munn's inspection. The other silent men leaned forward to examine them.

"Nothing but pieces of seaweed," said Cottrell Hampstead, Munn eyed them. Then he turned to look at the floor.

"Those are about the size of your tracks, Brenner. But they were made in red clay. How do you account for that?"

"Tobey wears my shoes," said Brenner.

Mrs. Brenner gasped. She advanced to Munn.

"What you asking all these questions for?" she pleaded.

Munn did not answer her. After a moment he asked.

"Did you hear a scream this afternoon?"

"Yes," she answered.

"How long after the screaming did your son come in?"

She hesitated. What was the best answer to make? Be-

wildered, she tried to decide. "Ten minutes or so," she said.

"Just so," agreed Munn. "Brenner, when did you come in?"

A trace of Mart's sullenness rose in his face. "I told you that once," he said.

"I mean how long after Tobey?"

"I dunno," said Mart.

"How long, Mrs. Brenner?"

She hesitated again. She scented a trap. "Oh, 'bout ten to fifteen minutes, I guess," she said.

Suddenly she burst out passionately. "What you hounding us for? We don't know nothing about the man on the hill. You ain't after the rest of the folks in the village like you are after us. Why you doing it? We ain't done nothing."

Munn made a slight gesture to Roamer, who rose and went to the door, and opened it. He reached out into the darkness. Then he turned. He was holding something in his hand, but Mrs. Brenner could not see what it was.

"You chop your wood with a short, heavy axe, don't you, Brenner?" said Munn.

Brenner nodded.

"It's marked with your name, isn't it?"

Brenner nodded again.

"Is this the axe?"

Mrs. Brenner gave a short, sharp scream. Red and clotted, even the handle marked with bloody spots, the axe was theirs.

Brenner started to his feet. "God!" he yelled, "that's where that axe went! Tobey took it!" More calmly he proceeded, "This afternoon before I went down on the beach I thought I'd chop some wood on the hill. But the axe was gone. So after I'd looked sharp for it and couldn't find it, I gave it up."

"Tobey didn't do it!" Mrs. Brenner cried thinly. "He's as harmless as a baby! He didn't do it! He didn't do it!"

"How about those clay tracks, Mrs. Brenner? There is red clay on the hill where the man was killed. There is red clay on your floor." Munn spoke kindly.

"Mart tracked in that clay. He changed shoes with Tobey. I tell you that's the truth." She was past caring for any harm that might befall her.

Brenner smiled with a wide tolerance. "It's likely, ain't it, that I'd change into shoes as wet as these?"

"Those tracks are Mart's!" Olga reiterated hysterically.

"They lead into your son's room, Mrs. Brenner. And we find your axe not far from your door, just where the path starts for the hill." Munn's eyes were grave.

The old woman in the corner began to whimper, "Blood and trouble! Blood and trouble all my days! Red on his hands! Dripping! Olga! Blood!"

"But the road to the beach begins there too," Mrs. Brenner cried, above the cracked voice, "and Tobey saw his pa before he came home. He said he did. I tell you, Mart was on the hill. He put on Tobey's shoes. Before God I'm telling you the truth."

Dick Roamer spoke hesitatingly, "Mebbe the old woman's right, Munn. Mebbe those tracks are Brenner's."

Mrs. Brenner turned to him in wild gratitude.

"You believe me, don't you?" she cried. The tears dribbled down her face. She saw the balance turning on a hair. A moment more and it might swing back. She turned and hobbled swiftly to the shelf. Proof! More proof! She must bring more proof of Tobey's innocence!

She snatched up his box of butterflies and came back to Munn.

"This is what Tobey was doin' this afternoon!" she cried in triumph. "He was catchin' butterflies! That ain't murder, is it?"

"Nobody catches butterflies in a fog," said Munn.

"Well, Tobey did. Here they are," Mrs. Brenner held out the box. Munn took it from her shaking hand. He looked at it. After a moment he turned it over. His eyes narrowed. Mrs. Brenner turned sick. The room went swimming around before her in a bluish haze. She had forgotten the blood on her hand that she had wiped off before Mart came home. Suppose the blood had been on the box.

The sheriff opened the box. A bruised butterfly, big, golden, fluttered up out of it. Very quietly the sheriff closed the box, and turned to Mrs. Brenner.

"Call your son," he said.

"What do you want of him? Tobey ain't done nothing. What you tryin' to do to him?"

"There is blood on this box, Mrs. Brenner."

"Mebbe he cut himself." Mrs. Brenner was fighting. Her face was chalky white.

"In the box, Mrs. Brenner, *is a gold watch and chain*. The man who was killed, Mrs. Brenner, had a piece of gold chain to match this in his buttonhole. *The rest of it had been torn off.*"

Olga made no sound. Her burning eyes turned toward Mart. In them was all of a heart's anguish and despair.

"Tell 'em, Mart! Tell 'em he didn't do it!" she finally pleaded.

Mart's face was inscrutable.

Munn rose. The other men got to their feet.

"Will you get the boy or shall I?" the sheriff said directly to Mrs. Brenner.

With a rush Mrs. Brenner was on her knees before Munn, clutching him about the legs with twining arms. Tears of agony dripped over her seamed face.

"He didn't do it! Don't take him! He's my baby! He never harmed anybody! He's my baby!" Then with a shriek, as Munn unclasped her arms, "Oh, my God! My God!"

Munn helped her to her feet. "Now, now, Mrs. Brenner, don't take on so," he said awkwardly. "There ain't going to be no harm come to your boy. It's to keep him from getting into harm that I'm taking him. The village is a mite worked up over this murder and they might get kind of upset if they thought Tobey was still loose. Better go and get him, Mrs. Brenner."

As she stood unheeding, he went on, "Now, don't be afraid. Nothing'll happen to him. No jedge would sentence him like a regular criminal. The most that'll happen will be to put him some safe place where he can't do himself nor no one else any more harm."

But still Mrs. Brenner's set expression did not change.

After a moment she shook off his aiding arm and moved slowly to Tobey's door. She paused there a moment, resting her hand on the latch, her eyes searching the faces of the men in the room. With a gesture of dreary resignation she opened the door and entered, closing it behind her.

Tobey lay in his bed, asleep. His rumpled hair was still

damp from the fog. His mother stroked it softly while her slow tears dropped down on his face with its expression of peaceful childhood.

"Tobey!" she called. Her voice broke in her throat. The tears fell faster.

"Huh!" He sat up, blinking at her.

"Get into your clothes, now! Right away!" she said.

He stared at her tears. A dismal sort of foreboding seemed to seize upon him. His face began to pucker. But he crawled out of his bed and began to dress himself in his awkward fashion, casting wistful and wondering glances in her direction.

She watched him, her heart growing heavier and heavier. There was no one to protect Tobey. She could not make those strangers believe that Mart had changed shoes with Tobey. Neither could she account for the blood-stained box and the watch with its length of broken chain. But if Tobey had been on the beach he had not been on the hill, and if he hadn't been on the hill he couldn't have killed the man they claimed he had killed. Mart had been on the hill. Her head whirled. Some place fate, destiny, something had blundered. She wrung her knotted hands together.

Presently Tobey was dressed. She took him by the hand. Her own hand was shaking, and very cold and clammy. Her knees were weak as she led him toward the door. She could feel them trembling so that every step was an effort. And her hand on the knob had barely strength to turn it. But turn it she did and opened the door.

"Here he is!" she cried chokingly. She freed her hand and laid it on his shoulder.

"Look at him," she moaned. "He couldn't 'a' done it. He's—he's just a boy!"

Sheriff Munn rose. His men rose with him.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Brenner," he said. "Terrible sorry. But you can see how it is. Things look pretty black for him."

He paused, looked around, hesitated for a moment. Finally he said, "Well, I guess we'd better be getting along."

Mrs. Brenner's hand closed with convulsive force on Tobey's shoulder.

"Tobey!" she screamed desperately, "where was you this afternoon? All afternoon?"

"On the beach," mumbled Tobey, shrinking into himself.

"Tobey! Tobey! Where'd you get blood on the box?"

He looked around. His cloudy eyes rested on her face helplessly.

"I dunno," he said.

Her teeth were chattering now; she laid her hand on his other shoulder.

"Try to remember, Tobey. Try to remember. Where'd you get the watch, the pretty watch that was in your box?"

He blinked at her.

"The pretty bright thing? Where did you get it?"

His eyes brightened. His lips trembled into a smile.

"I found it some place," he said. Eagerness to please her shone on his face.

"But where? What place?" The tears again made rivulets on her cheeks.

He shook his head. "I dunno."

Mrs. Brenner would not give up.

"You saw your pa this afternoon, Tobey?" she coached him softly.

He nodded.

"Where'd you see him?" she breathed.

He frowned. "I—saw pa——" he began, straining to pierce the cloud that covered him.

"Blood! Blood!" shrieked old Mrs. Brenner. She half rose, her head thrust forward on her shrivelled neck.

Tobey paused, confused. "I dunno," he said.

"Did he give you the pretty bright thing? And did he give you the axe—" she paused and repeated the word loudly— "the axe to bring home?"

Tobey caught at the word. "The axe?" he cried. "The axe! Ugh! It was all sticky!" He shuddered.

"Did pa give you the axe?"

But the cloud had settled. Tobey shook his head. "I dunno," he repeated his feeble denial.

Munn advanced. "No use, Mrs. Brenner, you see. Tobey, you'll have to come along with us."

Even to Tobey's brain some of the strain in the atmosphere must have penetrated, for he drew back. "Naw," he protested sulkily, "I don't want to."

Dick Roamer stepped to his side. He laid his hand on Tobey's arm. "Come along," he urged.

Mrs. Brenner gave a smothered gasp. Tobey woke to terror. He turned to run. In an instant the men surrounded him. Trapped, he stood still, his head lowered in his shoulders.

"Ma!" he screamed suddenly. "Ma! I don't want to go! Ma!"

He fell on his knees. Heavy childish sobs racked him. Deserted, terrified, he called upon the only friend he knew.

"Ma! Please, Ma!"

Munn lifted him up. Dick Roamer helped him, and between them they drew him to the door, his heart-broken calls and cries piercing every corner of the room.

They whisked him out of Mrs. Brenner's sight as quickly as they could. The other men piled out of the door, blocking the last vision of her son, but his bleating cries came shrilling back on the foggy air.

Mart closed the door. Mrs. Brenner stood where she had been when Tobey had first felt the closing of the trap and had started to run. She looked as though she might have been carved there. Her light breath seemed to do little more than lift her flat chest.

Mart turned from the door. His eyes glittered. He advanced upon her hungrily like a huge cat upon an enchanted mouse.

"So you thought you'd yelp on me, did you?" he snarled, licking his lips. "Thought you'd put me away, didn't you? Get me behind the bars, eh?"

"Blood!" moaned the old woman in the corner. "Blood!"

Mart strode to the table, pulling out from the bosom of his shirt a lumpy package wrapped in his handkerchief. He threw it down on the table. It fell heavily with a sharp ringing of coins.

"But I fooled you this time! Mart wasn't so dull this time, eh?" He turned toward her again.

Between them, disturbed in his resting-place on the table, the big bruised yellow butterfly raised himself on his sweeping wings.

Mart drew back a little. The butterfly flew toward Olga and brushed her face with a velvety softness.

Then Brenner lurched toward her, his face black with fury, his arm upraised. She stood still, looking at him with wide eyes in which a gleam of light showed.

"You devil!" she said, in a whispering voice. "You killed that man! You gave Tobey the watch and the axe! You changed shoes with him! You devil! You devil!"

He drew back for a blow. She did not move. Instead she mocked him, trying to smile.

"You whelp!" she taunted him. "Go on and hit me! I ain't running! And if you don't break me to bits I'm going to the sheriff and I'll tell him what you said to me just now. And he'll wonder how you got all that money in your pockets. He knows we're as poor as church mice. How you going to explain what you got?"

"I ain't going to be such a fool as to keep it on me!" Mart crowed with venomous mirth. "You nor the sheriff nor any one won't find it where I'm going to put it!"

The broken woman leaned forward, baiting him. The strange look of exaltation and sacrifice burned in her faded eyes. "I've got you, Mart!" she jeered. "You're going to swing yet! I'll even up with you for Tobey! You didn't think I could do it, did you? I'll show you! You're trapped, I tell you! And I done it!"

She watched Mart swing around to search the room and the blank window with apprehensive eyes. She sensed his eerie dread of the unseen. He couldn't see any one. He couldn't hear a sound. She saw that he was wet with the cold perspiration of fear. It would enrage him. She counted on that. He turned back to his wife in a white fury. She leaned toward him, inviting his blows as martyrs welcome the torch that will make their pile of fagots a blazing bier.

He struck her. Once. Twice. A rain of blows given in a blind passion that drove her to her knees, but she clung stubbornly, with rigid fingers to the table-edge. Although she was dazed she retained consciousness by a sharp effort of her failing will. She had not yet achieved that for which she was fighting.

The dull thud of the blows, the confusion, the sight of the blood drove the old woman in the corner suddenly upright on her tottering feet. Her rheumy eyes glared affrighted at the sight of the only friend she recognized in all her mad, black world lying there across the table. She stood swaying in a petrified terror for a moment. Then with a thin wail, "He's killing her!" she ran around them and gained the door.

With a mighty effort Olga Brenner lifted her head so that her face, swollen beyond recognition, was turned toward her mother-in-law. Her almost sightless eyes fastened themselves on the old woman.

"Run!" she cried. "Run to the village!"

The mad woman, obedient to that commanding voice, flung open the door and lurched over the threshold and disappeared in the fog. It came to Mart that the woman running through the night with the wail of terror was the greatest danger he would know. Olga Brenner saw his look of sick terror. He started to spring after the mad woman, forgetful of the half-conscious creature on her knees before him.

But as he turned, Olga, moved by the greatness of her passion, forced strength into her maimed body. With a straining leap she sprawled herself before him on the floor. He stumbled, caught for the table, and fell with a heavy crash, striking his head on a near-by chair. Olga raised herself on her shaking arms and looked at him. Minute after minute passed, and yet he lay still. A second long ten minutes ticked itself off on the clock, which Olga could barely see. Then Mart opened his eyes, sat up, and staggered to his feet.

Before full consciousness could come to him again, his wife crawled forward painfully and swiftly coiled herself about his legs. He struggled, still dizzy from his fall, bent over and tore at her twining arms, but the more he pulled the tighter she clung, fastening her misshapen fingers in the lacing of his shoes. He swore! And he became panic-stricken. He began to kick at her, to make lunges toward the distant door. Kicking and fighting, dragging her clinging body with him at every move, that body which drew him back one step for every two forward steps he took, at last he reached the wall. He clutched it, and as his hand slipped along trying to find a more secure hold he touched the cold iron of a long-handled pan hanging there.

With a snarl he snatched it down, raised it over his head, and brought it down upon his wife's back. Her hands opened spasmodically and fell flat at her sides. Her body rolled over, limp and broken. And a low whimper came from her bleeding lips.

Satisfied, Mart paused to regain his breath. He had no way of knowing how long this unequal fight had been going on.

But he was free. The way of escape was open. He laid his hand on the door.

There were voices. He cowered, cast hunted glances at the bloody figure on the floor, bit his knuckles in a frenzy.

As he looked, the eyes opened in his wife's swollen face, eyes aglow with triumph. "You'll swing for it, Mart!" she whispered faintly. "And the money's on the table! Tobey's saved!"

Rough hands were on the door. A flutter of breath like a sigh of relief crossed her lips and her lids dropped as the door burst open to a tide of men.

The big yellow butterfly swung low on his golden wings and came to rest on her narrow, sunken breast.

NO FLOWERS

By GORDON ARTHUR SMITH

From Harper's Monthly Magazine

STEVE DEMPSEY was a conspicuously ingenious chief machinist's mate—one of the most ingenious in the Naval Aviation Forces, Foreign Service, and he was ingenious not only with his hands, but with his tongue. That is why I cannot guarantee the veracity of what follows; I can but guarantee that he guaranteed it.

Steve had had a varied and highly coloured career, and I think that the war, or so much of it as he was permitted to see, seemed to him a comparatively tame affair—something all in the year's work. When he was fifteen years old he was conducting his father's public garage in a town not far from Denver; at that age he knew as much about motors as the men who built them, and he had, moreover, the invaluable knack of putting his finger immediately on a piece of erring mechanism and, with the aid of a bit of wire and a pair of pliers, setting it to rights. Given enough wire and a pair of pliers, I believe that he could have built the Eiffel Tower.

Becoming restless in the garage, he determined to make his fortune quickly, and accordingly went out prospecting in the vicinity of the Little Annie mine. He bought himself a small patch of promising ground and he and another fellow shovelled away until they had no money left. So then he took up aviation.

He was one of the pioneers of the flying-men in this country. He used to fly at country fairs in an old ramshackle bus of the Wright model—a thing of sticks and canvas and wires precariously hung together. But he flew it. And he rehabilitated his finances.

When war was declared he enlisted as a gob and was sent on sea duty. He knew, of course, nothing of sea duty, but lack of knowledge of a subject had never daunted him, for he

had the faculty of learning things quickly by himself and for himself. His mechanical ability asserting itself, he was made a machinist's mate, second class, and transferred over to the Aviation. When I knew him he had proved so valuable at the various air stations that he had been advanced to chief machinist's mate and was an assistant in the Technical Division at Paris headquarters.

He was a very friendly soul, always respectful enough, even when outspoken, and no more in fear of an admiral than of—well, he would have said than of a marine. During his year of service, you see, he had absorbed most of the navy traditions. He spoke the navy speech like an old-timer, and undoubtedly amplified the regular navy vocabulary with picturesque expressions of his own. Of course he was very profane. . . .

Sunday morning at headquarters was apt to be a slack morning, with not much work to do; but in intervals of idleness one could always be certain of finding something of interest to see or hear in Steve's office. Usually he would be in front of his drafting-board working on a new design for a muffler or a machine-gun turret or a self-starter, or figuring out the possibility of flying *through* the Arc de Triomphe, which he claimed could be done with six feet to spare at each wing-tip. This, and climbing the Eiffel Tower on its girders, were two of his pet projects.

On a Sunday in August of 1918 there were assembled around his drafting-board an interested and receptive audience of four—Peters, an ensign attached to the "lighter-than-air" section; Madden, a pilot on his way up from Italy to the Northern Bombing Group; Erskine, a lieutenant in the Operations Division; and Matthews, a chief yeoman.

"Yes," Dempsey was saying, "I'm *beaucoup* sorry for these here frawgs. They're just bein' massacred—that's all it is—*massacred*. And there don't anybody take much notice, either. Say, somebody was tellin' me the other day just how many the French has lost since the beginnin' of the war. Just about one million. I wouldn't believe it, but it's straight. It was a French colonel that was tellin' me out to the Hispano factory day before yesterday, and he'd oughta know because he was through the battle of the Marne and the Soam, and everything."

"Did he tell you in French?" inquired Ensign Peters, meaningly, for Dempsey's French was admittedly limited.

"Pardon?" said Dempsey, and then, grasping the innuendo: "No, sir, he did *not*. Why, he talks English as good as you and me. That's another thing about these frawgs—they can all *parlez-vous* any language. I never yet seen a Frenchie I couldn't talk to yet."

"Did you ever see anybody you couldn't talk to yet, Steve?" suggested the chief yeoman.

"Here, you, how d'ya get that way? Who was it I seen th' other night out walking in the Boy de Bullone with a skirt? And I guess you wasn't talkin'—why, you was talkin' so fast you had to help out with your hands, just like a frawg. . . . No, as I say, I feel sorry for these French in more ways than one."

"Just how do you display that sorrow?" asked Ensign Madden.

Dempsey hesitated an instant, scratched his head, and very carefully drew a line on the tracing-paper in front of him.

"Well, sir," he said, finally, "I displayed it last Sunday."

Then he relapsed into silence, and resumed work on the drawing. But as he worked he grinned quietly—a provocative grin which inspired curiosity.

"What did you do last Sunday?" prodded Peters.

The grin widened as Steve glanced up from the board. He laid aside his instruments, tilted back in his chair, and said: "Well, it wasn't very regular, what I done last Sunday, but I'll tell you if you don't have me up before a court. . . . You remember last Sunday was a swell day? Spring in the air, I guess, and everything, and everybody was out walking like Matthews, here, with a Jane. I 'ain't got a Jane, of course——"

"What!" roared Matthews.

"I 'ain't got a Jane, of course, so I decides to take a little look around all by myself. Well, I goes down the Chomps-Eleezy feelin' pretty good and sorta peppy and lookin' for trouble. I see all them army heroes—the vets and the dentists and the S O S—each with a skirt, and I passes Matthews, here, with *his* skirt clingin' to him like a cootie."

"Cut it out, you big stiff," interposed Matthews.

"Like a cootie," continued Steve, "and I got sorta de

pressed. So I sez, me for the quiet, unfrequented streets over acrost the river. Well, sir, I was just passin' the Looover—that big museum, or whatever it is—when I see a hearse comin' in the opposite direction. It was a pretty sick-lookin' hearse, too. It had a coupla animals hitched to it that was probably called horses when they was young, and that didn't have a steak minoot left on 'em. But they was all covered with mangy black plumes and tassels and things—you know, the way they rig 'em up when the corpse is takin' his last drive. And there was an old bird sittin' up on the box-seat with a hat like Napoleon One.

"Well, at first it looked to me like it was just the regular frawg funeral, and I didn't pay no special attention, only I give it the salute when I got opposite. Then I see that there weren't no flowers nor tin wreaths on the coffin—except there was one little buncha pinks, and they was a pretty sad-lookin' buncha pinks, too, sir. Then I see that there weren't no procession walkin' along behind—except there was one little old woman all in black and lookin' sorta sick and scared. Yes, sir, there she was walkin' all by herself and lookin' lonelier 'n hell.

"So I sez to myself: 'It's all wrong, Steve, it's all wrong. Here's a poor dead frawg, the only son of his mother and her a widow'—that's Bible stuff, sir—'goin' out to be planted with none of the gang around. It's tough,' I sez. 'I'll say it is.' Well, I told you I didn't have nothin' much to do, so I sez, 'Laffiette, cheeri-o,' and steps up beside the old lady. That makes two mourners, anyhow.

"Well, the old lady give me the once over and seen Mr. Daniels's uniform and the rooster on my sleeve, and I guess decides that I'm eligible to the club. Anyway, she sorta nodded at me and pretty soon begun to snuffle and look for her handkerchief. It wasn't no use, though, for she didn't have any.

"Meanwhile we was crossin' one of them bridges—just crawlin' along like one of the motors had quit and the other was hittin' only on three. If we'd been in the air we'd stalled sure and gone into a tail-spin. All the time I was thinkin' how to say 'Cheer up' to the old dame in French, but all I could think of at first was 'Bravo' and '*Vous-ate trayjolee !*' Still it was sorta stupid walkin' along and no conversation, so

I guess I musta had an inspiration or something, and I sez, pointing ahead at the coffin, '*Mort avec mon Dieu.*' The old lady lost her step at that, because I suppose she was surprised by a Yank speakin' good French, most of 'em relyin', like Matthews here, on the sign language, although I'll say that Matthews gets plenty far enough with that. Why, they're four girls and a widow at home that if they knew how far Matthews was gettin' with the sign language they'd be gray-headed to-day. . . . Aw, well, Matthews, quit spoilin' this drawin'. Do you wanta get me and Admiral Sims into trouble with the department?"

"Go ahead with your funeral, Steve," said Lieutenant Erskine—"unless your power of invention has failed you."

Dempsey looked up with a hurt and innocent expression on his face.

"Oh, lootenant," he exclaimed, "what I'm tellin' is gospel. It's as true—it's as true as the komunikays."

"All right," said Erskine, "issue another, then."

"Well," Steve continued, "where was I? Oh yes, we was on the bridge and I'd just told the old lady that the dead soldier was in heaven by now."

"Soldier?" repeated Erskine. "What made you believe he was a soldier?"

"Why, ain't every frawg a soldier now, sir?"

"How did you know, even, that it was a male frog?"

"I'm comin' to that, sir," replied Steve. "That comes next. You see, once the old lady knew I could *parlez-vous* with the best of 'em, she continued the conversation and sez, '*Mon pover fees.*' Get that? '*Mon pover fees.*' Well, that means, translated, 'My poor son.'"

At this revelation of startling linguistic ability Steve paused to receive felicitations. When they were forthcoming he proceeded.

"So, of course, I know then that the corpse is a dead soldier, and I decides to see him through until he's made a safe landing somewhere. Well, just as we was acrost the bridge, the two ex-horses doin' fine on the down grade, I seen a marine standin' on the corner tellin' a buncha girls all about Château-Teery. Well, I thought that maybe it 'ud be a good thing if he joined the funeral, because, anyway, the girls could hear all about Château-Teery the next marine they saw. So I yell out at

him: 'Hey, you! Come and join the navy and see the world!'

"Well, he looks around, and, although I guess he didn't much wanta leave them girls, he decides that he'll come and see what the big game is. So he salutes the corpse and steps in beside me and whispers, 'Say, chief, what's the idea?'

"'Whadd'ya think, you poor cheese?' I sez. 'D'ya think it's a weddin'? Get in step. We're goin' to bury a French *poiloo*.'

"'Is that so?' he sez.

"'Yes, that's so,' I sez. 'Get over acrost on the other side of the widowed mother and say somethin' cheerful to her in French—if you know any.'

"'If I know any!' sez he. 'Wasn't I at Château-Teery?'

"'Well,' I sez, 'don't tell her about that. Tell her some-thin' she ain't heard already.'

"'You go to blazes!' he sez, and crosses over like I told him. And pretty soon I seen him gettin' all red and I knew he was goin' to shoot some French at the old lady, and, sure enough, out he come with, '*Madame je swee enchantay*.'

"Well, sir, I like to 've died tryin' to keep from laughin' at that, because what it means translated is, 'Madam, I'm dee-lighted.' Trust them marines to say the right thing at the wrong time—I'll say they do.

"By the time I get under control we're opposite the French Aviation Headquarters—you know, the Service Technique on the Bullyvard Saint-Germain. Well, there was a lot of doughboys hangin' around there wastin' time, and I see one on a motor-cycle with a sergeant sittin' in the side-car. So I step out of the ranks and sez to the sergeant, 'What ya doin'?' And he sez, 'Waitin'—but there's nobody home at all, at all.' So I sez: 'Well, you and your side-car is commandeered for this funeral. We're buryin' a frawg and we need some more mourners. The old lady is his widowed mother, and the corpse, he's her only son and her a widow.' He sez: 'Shure, Oi'll come, an' Oi'll be afther gettin' some o' thim other divvles to jine. Me name is Roilly.' 'Right-o, old dear,' I sez. 'I didn't think it was Moses and Straus.'

"Well, sir, Reilly was a good scout, and inside of a minute he had six doughboys lined up behind the hearse and him bringin' up the rear in the side-car. The side-car kept back-

firin', and it sounded like we was firin' salutes to the dead all the way to the park.

"I wanta tell ya, that old lady was tickled. Why, there we was already ten strong, with more to come, because I drafted three gobs at the Bullyvard Raspail. They wasn't quite sober, but I kep' my eye on 'em and they behaved fine. I sez to them: 'You drunken bums, you! You join this funeral or I'll see you're put in the brig to-night.' But to make sure they'd not disgrace Mr. Daniels's uniform I put 'em right behind the widow and the marine and me.

"Well, it appears that one of 'em talks French good—real good, I mean, sir—like a frawg waiter or a coacher."

"Or a what?" interjected Erskine.

"Or a coacher," repeated Steve, with dignity. "The fact is, he talked it so good that—well, never mind that yet. He's a smart fellow, though, Mr. Erskine, by the name of Rathbone. Well, never mind—only he's a good fellow and 'ud be pretty useful here, with his French and everything.

"Well, anyway, I begun to wonder after a while where that fellow driving the hearse was takin' us to. We'd gone out the old Bullyvard Raspail a deuce of a way, and Napoleon One showed no signs of stoppin' them horses, and I didn't see no cemetery.

"I sez to the marine, 'I guess we're not goin' to stop till we get to Château-Teery,' and he sez, 'You go to hell and stop *there*.' So I sez, 'I hope the poor old lady don't understand your English.'

"The old dame, I could see, was beginnin' to get weak in the knees and was walkin' about as unsteady as the three gobs behind us. So me and the marine each grabbed an arm and she sez, '*Mercy*,' and tried to start a smile. I guess it was pretty hard goin', because the smile didn't get far.

"Well, anyway, we kep' right on and passed that stone lion out there and went right through the gates, the boys all marchin' strong and the motor-bike makin' one hell of a noise aft. When we get through the gates I fall back and I sez to the gob, 'Rathbone,' I sez, 'ask the lady where we're headed and if she trusts the driver.' So Rathbone moves up and has quite a *parlez-vous* with her.

"Well, I sez, 'what's she say?'

"She sez, sez Rathbone, 'that we're goin' to bury him in a

field out here, and that there ain't no priest will bury him and there ain't no cemetery she can bury him in.'

"'That's funny,' I sez—'too poor, I guess. Well, anyway, it's a shame—I'll say it is—it's a shame.'

"'Yes,' sez Rathbone, slowly, as if he was thinkin'—'yes, it's a damn shame!'

"'And the other two gobs who wasn't as sober as Rathbone, they sez, too, 'Yes, it's a damn shame.'

"'That makes the navy unanimous,' I sez, and then I begin to work my bean. I was still workin' it and it was respondin' about as well as one of them black Kabyles that are pretendin' to help build our station at Lacanau—I was still workin' it, when the old hearse swings to the right through a gate in a stone wall and brings up short in a field. There was grass in the field and daisies and things, and a lotta tin crosses stuck on mounds that I guessed was graves. It woulda been a pretty cheerful old field, I guess, if they'd let it alone, but them tin crosses looked pretty sick and the paint was peelin' off the tin flowers that people had stuck on the graves, and I guess the head gardener wasn't much of a hand at weedin'.

"'Well, anyway, we all line up in a sorta circle and every one looks pretty downhearted and the three gobs gets perfectly sober, which was a relief. Then Napoleon One climbs down from his box and says somethin' in French to the old widow and points to two birds who're diggin' a hole half-way acrost the field. Rathbone sez that he sez that that is the grave and that the two birds is the grave-diggers and pall-bearers combined.

"'They are, are they?' I sez. 'This is a military funeral, ain't it? A military funeral conducted by the navy with the army for pall-bearers. And I call on Sergeant Reilly to back me up.'

"'Shure,' sez Reilly, 'but who'll be providin' the priest?'

"'Well, when he sez that my old bean give a sort of throb, and I sez: 'Don't bother your nut about the priest. He'll be forthcomin' when and if needed.'

"'So, while Reilly was explainin' to his six doughboys and Rathbone was bringin' Napoleon One up to date, me and the widow and the marine goes over to superintend the two birds diggin' the grave. They was two funny-lookin' old birds, too—I'll say they was. They was about a hundred years old

apiece and had long white whiskers like St. Peter, and, say, they talked a whole lot more than they dug. I guess they musta been workin' on that grave for a coupla weeks—you know, ten minutes *parlez-vous* and then one shovela dirt. Me and the marine had to grab their shovels and finish the job or there wouldn't 'a' been no funeral *that* day.

"When we get back the six doughboys is all ready to give first aid to the coffin, and Rathbone is talkin' to Napoleon One like they was brothers. So I go up to them and I sez to Rathbone:

"'Looka here, Rathbone. I'm the priest at this party. See?'

"'What's that?' sez Rathbone. 'Come again.'

"'I say I'm the priest. This dead *poiloo* ain't gotta priest nor nothin' and there's his poor mother and her a widow. So I'm that missin' priest, and I'm not too proud to perform free and gratis. Get that?'

"'Hold on, chief,' sez Rathbone. 'You ain't got nothin' to wear.'

"'Nothin' to wear!' I sez. 'You poor cheese, I'm a navy chaplain.'

"'You look more like a Charlie Chaplin,' sez Rathbone.

"I guess that bird wasn't sober yet, after all, because he thought he was funny.

"'Can the comedy,' I sez, 'and you go tell the widow that Father Dempsey, the head chaplain of the U. S. Navy, has consented to perform this afternoon. Now, get it straight, and for Gawd's sake don't go and laugh or I'll put you in the brig.'

"Well, Rathbone looks at me like I was goin' to my death.

"'Good-by, chief,' he sez. 'Wait till the admiral hears of this.'

"'Haw,' I sez—'if he does I'll get decorated.'

"Well, I give Reilly the high sign and out comes the coffin on the doughboys' shoulders. Napoleon One leads the way, and Rathbone and the widow step in after the coffin, and I see that they is talkin' together *beaucoup* earnestly.

"When we get to the grave the doughboys set down the coffin beside it and all forms in a circle with me and the widow facin' each other. And then there's an anxious silence. I'll say right here that I was the most anxious, and I was sweatin'

more than I guers any chaplain oughta sweat. But, by luck, I happen to think that I have my old logarithm-book in my pocket—you know, the one that's bound in black patent-leather. Looks sorta as if it might be a prayer-book or some-thin' like that. Anyway, the widow, bein' a frawg widow, I figgered how she'd think maybe it was a Yank Bible issued special to the A. E. F. and condensed like malted milk or some-thin'.

"So I draw the old logarithm-book outa my coat and ease up gently to the edge of the grave. The doughboys and the gobs, all except Rathbone, who is wise, acourse, begin to nudge each other and snicker. I oughta warned 'em what was comin', but I didn't have no time, it come to me so quick. So I pretended to read from the book, and sez, in a low voice and very solemn, like I was openin' the funeral, 'If any you birds here starts laughin' I'll see him after the show and I'll knock the daylight outa him.'

"'Amen,' sez Rathbone, very piously.

"'We've come here to-day,' I sez, always like I was readin' from the book—'we've come here to-day to plant a frawg soldier who's the only son of his mother and her a widow. And she's so broke that there ain't no regular priest or no regular cemetery that 'll offer their services. So I'm the priest, and it's goin' to make a lotta difference to that poor widow's feelin's when she thinks her son's got a swell U. S. Navy priest administering the rites. Now, get that straight and don't start whinnyin' like a buncha horses and gum the game.'

"Well, I stop there for breath, and Rathbone, who's right on the job, comes across with another 'Amen,' and Reilly, who's a good Catholic, sez, '*Pax vobiscum.*'

"So that's all right, and I give her the gun and go ahead.

"'This here *poiloo*,' I sez, 'I don't know much about him, but he was a regular fellow and a good old bird and treated his mother swell and everything, and I guess if we was wise to everything he'd done we'd be proud to be here and we'd 'a' brung a lotta flowers and things. He most likely was at the battle of the Marne and the Soam and Verdun, and maybe he was at Château-Teery. Anyway, he was a grand fighter, and done his bit all the time and kep' the Huns from passin'.

And I wanta tell you that we gotta hand it to these French, because they may be little guys, but they carry the longest bayonets I ever see in any man's army.'

"'Amen,' sez all the doughboys and the 'gobs, except one that yells, 'Alleluia!' He musta been from the South or somewheres.

"'And so,' I sez, 'we're proud to give this frawg a good send-off, and even if we ain't got a real chaplain and the guns to fire a salute with, we're doin' the poor widow a lotta good, and that's somethin'—I'll say it is.'

"'Amen,' sez the audience.

"Then I sez, 'Glory be,' and cross myself and signal the doughboys to lower away on the coffin, and I flung a handfula dirt in on top like I see 'em do always.

"Well, the poor old widow near collapsed and Rathbone and the marine had to hold hard to keep her on her pins. But Reilly created a diversion by startin' up the motor-bike, and it back-fired like a buncha rookies tryin' to fire a volley. If we'd hadda bugle we coulda sounded taps, and the musical accompaniment woulda been complete.

"Napoleon One come up and shake hands with me like I'd won the Medeye Militaire, and, before I could side-step, the widow had her arms round my neck and was kissin' me on both cheeks. Napoleon sez it was a '*Beau geste*' which I thought meant a fine joke, and I was afraid the bird was wise, but Rathbone sez no, that it meant a swell action; and the widow sez, over and over again, '*Ces braves Americains—ces braves Americains!*' The cordial entente was pretty cordial on the whole! I'll say it was."

At this point Steve Dempsey paused and glanced about as who should say, "Are there any comments or questions?" For a while there was none forthcoming, but finally Lieutenant Erskine ventured a remark.

"This occurred last Sunday?" he inquired, mildly.

"Yes, sir," said Steve—"last Sunday."

"Um," said Erskine, and without further remarks left the office.

On his return he bore a copy of *Le Matin* in his hand. He sat down and leisurely and silently unfolded the sheet. Steve had resumed his work, but I noticed that he kept an eye on Erskine.

"I wonder," said Erskine, smoothing out the newspaper on his knees—"I wonder, Steve, if you happened to see this very interesting article."

"No, sir," said Steve. "I don't read French like I speak it."

"Well," said Erskine, "I'll translate. This paper is dated last Monday, and on page two occurs the following announcement:

"American soldiers, sailors, and marines attend funeral of notorious apache. Jean the Rat, convicted murderer and suicide, and denied the offices of the Catholic Church, is buried by stalwart Americans. Department of Foreign Affairs reluctant to file protest at present time. Strange demonstration believed to be unofficial and without U. S. government sanction, although U. S. Navy chaplain delivers eloquent oration in English."

Erskine put aside the paper in silence, and we all turned to watch Steve. He was very red, even to his ears.

"Gawd!" he spluttered. "Does it really say that, sir? Honest?"

Erskine nodded. "Yes," he said. "We'll be lucky if we avoid international complications."

"An apache murderer," Steve groaned—"and me thinkin' it was a frawg hero. Will I get a court martial for it, sir?"

"I doubt it," said Erskine, "but I don't think you'll get the Congressional Medal or the Legion of Honour, either. Maybe, though, the President, in recognition of your services toward cementing the entente, will appoint you the next ambassador to France."

"Well, anyway," said Steve, still violently red about the face and ears—"well, anyway, I don't care. Even if it weren't a first-class corpse, it was a first-class funeral."

FOOTFALLS

By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

From The Pictorial Review

THIS is not an easy story; not a road for tender or for casual feet. Better the meadows. Let me warn you, it is as hard as that old man's soul and as sunless as his eyes. It has its inception in catastrophe, and its end in an act of almost incredible violence; between them it tells barely how one long blind can become also deaf and dumb.

He lived in one of those old Puritan sea towns where the strain has come down austere and moribund, so that his act would not be quite unbelievable. Except that the town is no longer Puritan and Yankee. It has been betrayed; it has become an outpost of the Portuguese islands.

This man, this blind cobbler himself, was a Portuguese from St. Michael, in the Western Islands, and his name was Boaz Negro.

He was happy. An unquenchable exuberance lived in him. When he arose in the morning he made vast, as it were uncontrollable, gestures with his stout arms. He came into his shop singing. His voice, strong and deep as the chest from which it emanated, rolled out through the doorway and along the street, and the fishermen, done with their morning work and lounging and smoking along the wharfs, said, "Boaz is to work already." Then they came up to sit in the shop.

In that town a cobbler's shop is a club. One sees the interior always dimly thronged. They sit on the benches watching the artizan at his work for hours, and they talk about everything in the world. A cobbler is known by the company he keeps.

Boaz Negro kept young company. He would have nothing to do with the old. On his own head the gray hairs set thickly.

He had a grown son. But the benches in his shop were for the lusty and valiant young, men who could spend the night drinking, and then at three o'clock in the morning turn out in the rain and dark to pull at the weirs, sing songs, buffet one another among the slippery fish in the boat's bottom, and make loud jokes about the fundamental things, love and birth and death. Harkening to their boasts and strong prophecies his breast heaved and his heart beat faster. He was a large, full-blooded fellow, fashioned for exploits; the flame in his darkness burned higher even to hear of them.

It is scarcely conceivable how Boaz Negro could have come through this much of his life still possessed of that unquenchable and priceless exuberance; how he would sing in the dawn; how, simply listening to the recital of deeds in gale or brawl, he could easily forget himself a blind man, tied to a shop and a last; easily make of himself a lusty young fellow breasting the sunlit and adventurous tide of life.

He had had a wife, whom he had loved. Fate, which had scourged him with the initial scourge of blindness, had seen fit to take his Angelina away. He had had four sons. Three, one after another, had been removed, leaving only Manuel, the youngest. Recovering slowly, with agony, from each of these recurrent blows, his unquenchable exuberance had lived. And there was another thing quite as extraordinary. He had never done anything but work, and that sort of thing may kill the flame where an abrupt catastrophe fails. Work in the dark. Work, work, work! And accompanied by privation; an almost miserly scale of personal economy. Yes, indeed, he had "skinned his fingers," especially in the earlier years. When it tells most.

How he had worked! Not alone in the daytime, but also sometimes, when orders were heavy, far into the night. It was strange for one, passing along that deserted street at midnight, to hear issuing from the black shop of Boaz Negro the rhythmical tap-tap-tap of hammer on wooden peg.

Nor was that sound all: no man in town could get far past that shop in his nocturnal wandering unobserved. No more than a dozen footfalls, and from the darkness Boaz's voice rolled forth, fraternal, stentorian, "Good night, Antone!" "Good night to you, Caleb Snow!"

To Boaz Negro it was still broad day.

Now, because of this, he was what might be called a substantial man. He owned his place, his shop, opening on the sidewalk, and behind it the dwelling-house with trellised galleries upstairs and down.

And there was always something for his son, a "piece for the pocket," a dollar-, five-, even a ten-dollar bill if he had "got to have it." Manuel was "a good boy." Boaz not only said this; he felt that he was assured of it in his understanding, to the infinite peace of his heart.

It was curious that he should be ignorant only of the one nearest to him. Not because he was physically blind. Be certain he knew more of other men and of other men's sons than they or their neighbours did. More, that is to say, of their hearts, their understandings, their idiosyncrasies, and their ultimate weight in the balance-pan of eternity.

His simple explanation of Manuel was that Manuel "wasn't too stout." To others he said this, and to himself. Manuel was not indeed too robust. How should he be vigorous when he never did anything to make him so? He never worked. Why should he work, when existence was provided for, and when there was always that "piece for the pocket"? Even a ten-dollar bill on a Saturday night! No, Manuel "wasn't too stout."

In the shop they let it go at that. The missteps and frailties of every one else in the world were canvassed there with the most shameless publicity. But Boaz Negro was a blind man, and in a sense their host. Those reckless, strong young fellows respected and loved him. It was allowed to stand at that. Manuel was "a good boy." Which did not prevent them, by the way, from joining later in the general condemnation of that father's laxity—"the ruination of the boy!"

"He should have put him to work, that's what."

"He should have said to Manuel, 'Look here, if you want a dollar, go earn it first.'"

As a matter of fact, only one man ever gave Boaz the advice direct. That was Campbell Wood. And Wood never sat in that shop.

In every small town there is one young man who is spoken of as "rising." As often as not he is not a native. but "from away."

In this town Campbell Wood was that man. He had come from another part of the state to take a place in the bank. He lived in the upper story of Boaz Negro's house, the ground floor now doing for Boaz and the meagre remnant of his family. The old woman who came in to tidy up for the cobbler looked after Wood's rooms as well.

Dealing with Wood, one had first of all the sense of his incorruptibility. A little ruthless perhaps, as if one could imagine him, in defence of his integrity, cutting off his friend, cutting off his own hand, cutting off the very stream flowing out from the wellsprings of human kindness. An exaggeration, perhaps.

He was by long odds the most eligible young man in town; good looking in a spare, ruddy, sandy-haired Scottish fashion; important, incorruptible, "rising." But he took good care of his heart. Precisely that; like a sharp-eyed duenna to his own heart. One felt that here was the man, if ever was the man, who held his destiny in his own hand. Failing, of course, some quite gratuitous and unforeseeable catastrophe.

Not that he was not human, or even incapable of laughter or passion. He was, in a way, immensely accessible. He never clapped one on the shoulder; on the other hand, he never failed to speak. Not even to Boaz.

Returning from the bank in the afternoon, he had always a word for the cobbler. Passing out again to supper at his boarding-place, he had another, about the weather, the prospects of rain. And if Boaz were at work in the dark when he returned from an evening at the Board of Trade, there was a "Good night, Mr. Negro!"

On Boaz's part, his attitude toward his lodger was curious and paradoxical. He did not pretend to anything less than reverence for the young man's position; precisely on account of that position he was conscious toward Wood of a vague distrust. This was because he was an uneducated fellow.

To the uneducated the idea of large finance is as uncomfortable as the idea of the law. It must be said for Boaz that, responsive to Wood's unfailing civility, he fought against this sensation of dim and somehow shameful distrust.

Nevertheless his whole parental soul was in arms that evening, when, returning from the bank and finding the shop

empty of loungers, Wood paused a moment to propose the bit of advice already referred to.

"Haven't you ever thought of having Manuel learn the trade?"

A suspicion, a kind of premonition, lighted the fires of defence.

"Shoemaking," said Boaz, "is good enough for a blind man."

"Oh, I don't know. At least it's better than doing nothing at all."

Boaz's hammer was still. He sat silent, monumental. Outwardly. For once his unfailing response had failed him, "Manuel ain't too stout, you know." Perhaps it had become suddenly inadequate.

He hated Wood; he despised Wood; more than ever before, a hundredfold more, quite abruptly, he distrusted Wood.

How could a man say such things as Wood had said? And where Manuel himself might hear!

Where Manuel *had* heard! Boaz's other emotions—hatred and contempt and distrust—were overshadowed. Sitting in darkness, no sound had come to his ears, no footfall, no infinitesimal creaking of a floor-plank. Yet by some sixth uncanny sense of the blind he was aware that Manuel was standing in the dusk of the entry joining the shop to the house.

Boaz made a Herculean effort. The voice came out of his throat, harsh, bitter, and loud enough to have carried ten times the distance to his son's ears.

"Manuel is a good boy!"

"Yes—h'm—yes—I suppose so."

Wood shifted his weight. He seemed uncomfortable.

"Well. I'll be running along, I—ugh! Heavens!"

Something was happening. Boaz heard exclamations, breathings, the rustle of sleeve-cloth in large, frantic, and futile graspings—all without understanding. Immediately there was an impact on the floor, and with it the unmistakable clink of metal. Boaz even heard that the metal was minted, and that the coins were gold. He understood. A coin-sack, gripped not quite carefully enough for a moment under the other's overcoat, had shifted, slipped, escaped, and fallen.

And Manuel had heard!

It was a dreadful moment for Boaz, dreadful in its native sense, as full of dread. Why? It was a moment of horrid revelation, ruthless clarification. His son, his link with the departed Angelina, that "good boy"—Manuel, standing in the shadow of the entry, visible alone to the blind, had heard the clink of falling gold, and—and *Boaz wished that he had not!*

There, amazing, disconcerting, destroying, stood the sudden fact.

Sitting as impassive and monumental as ever, his strong, bleached hands at rest on his work, round drops of sweat came out on Boaz's forehead. He scarcely took the sense of what Wood was saying. Only fragments.

"Government money, understand—for the breakwater workings—huge—too many people know here, everywhere—don't trust the safe—tin safe—'Noah's Ark'—give you my word—Heavens, no!"

It boiled down to this—the money, more money than was good for that antiquated "Noah's Ark" at the bank—and whose contemplated sojourn there overnight was public to too many minds—in short, Wood was not only incorruptible, he was canny. To what one of those minds, now, would it occur that he should take away that money bodily, under casual cover of his coat, to his own lodgings behind the cobbler-shop of Boaz Negro? For this one, this important night!

He was sorry the coin-sack had slipped, because he did not like to have the responsibility of secret sharer cast upon any one, even upon Boaz, even by accident. On the other hand, how tremendously fortunate that it had been Boaz and not another. So far as that went, Wood had no more anxiety now than before. One incorruptible knows another.

"I'd trust you, Mr. Negro" (that was one of the fragments which came and stuck in the cobbler's brain), "as far as I would myself. As long as it's only you. I'm just going up here and throw it under the bed. Oh, yes, certainly."

Boaz ate no supper. For the first time in his life food was dry in his gullet. Even under those other successive crushing blows of Fate the full and generous habit of his functionings had carried on unabated; he had always eaten what was

set before him. To-night, over his untouched plate, he watched Manuel with his sightless eyes, keeping track of his every mouthful, word, intonation, breath. What profit he expected to extract from this catlike surveillance it is impossible to say.

When they arose from the supper-table Boaz made another Herculean effort. "Manuel, you're a good boy!"

The formula had a quality of appeal, of despair, and of command.

"Manuel, you should be short of money, maybe. Look, what's this? A tenner? Well, there's a piece for the pocket; go and enjoy yourself."

He would have been frightened had Manuel, upsetting tradition, declined the offering. With the morbid contrariness of the human imagination, the boy's avid grasping gave him no comfort.

He went out into the shop, where it was already dark, drew to him his last, his tools, mallets, cutters, pegs, leather. And having prepared to work, he remained idle. He found himself listening.

It has been observed that the large phenomena of sunlight and darkness were nothing to Boaz Negro. A busy night was broad day. Yet there was a difference; he knew it with the blind man's eyes, the ears.

Day was a vast confusion, or rather a wide fabric, of sounds; great and little sounds all woven together, voices, footfalls, wheels, far-off whistles and foghorns, flies buzzing in the sun. Night was another thing. Still there were voices and footfalls, but rarer, emerging from the large, pure body of silence as definite, surprising, and yet familiar entities.

To-night there was an easterly wind, coming off the water and carrying the sound of waves. So far as other fugitive sounds were concerned it was the same as silence. The wind made little difference to the ears. It nullified, from one direction at least, the other two visual processes of the blind, the sense of touch and the sense of smell. It blew away from the shop, toward the living-house.

As has been said, Boaz found himself listening, scrutinizing with an extraordinary attention, this immense background of sound. He heard footfalls. The story of that night was written, for him, in footfalls.

He heard them moving about the house, the lower floor, prowling here, there, halting for long spaces, advancing, retreating softly on the planks. About this aimless, interminable perambulation there was something to twist the nerves, something led and at the same time driven like a succession of frail and indecisive charges.

Boaz lifted himself from his chair. All his impulse called him to make a stir, join battle, cast in the breach the reinforcement of his presence, authority, good will. He sank back again; his hands fell down. The curious impotence of the spectator held him.

He heard footfalls, too, on the upper floor, a little fainter, borne to the inner rather than the outer ear, along the solid causeway of partitions and floor, the legs of his chair, the bony framework of his body. Very faint indeed. Sinking back easily into the background of the wind. They, too, came and went, this room, that, to the passage, the stair-head, and away. About them too there was the same quality of being led and at the same time of being driven.

Time went by. In his darkness it seemed to Boaz that hours must have passed. He heard voices. Together with the footfalls, that abrupt, brief, and (in view of Wood's position) astounding interchange of sentences made up his history of the night. Wood must have opened the door at the head of the stair; by the sound of his voice he would be standing there, peering below perhaps; perhaps listening.

"What's wrong down there?" he called. "Why don't you go to bed?"

After a moment, came Manuel's voice, "Ain't sleepy."

"Neither am I. Look here, do you like to play cards?"

"What kind? Euchre! I like euchre all right. Or pitch."

"Well, what would you say to coming up and having a game of euchre then, Manuel? If you can't sleep?"

"That'd be all right."

The lower footfalls ascended to join the footfalls on the upper floor. There was the sound of a door closing.

Boaz sat still. In the gloom he might have been taken for a piece of furniture, of machinery, an extraordinary lay figure, perhaps, for the trying on of the boots he made. He

seemed scarcely to breathe, only the sweat starting from his brow giving him an aspect of life.

He ought to have run, and leaped up that inner stair and pounded with his fists on that door. He seemed unable to move. At rare intervals feet passed on the sidewalk outside, just at his elbow, so to say, and yet somehow, to-night, immeasurably far away. Beyond the orbit of the moon. He heard Rugg, the policeman, noting the silence of the shop, muttering, "Boaz is to bed to-night," as he passed.

The wind increased. It poured against the shop with its deep, continuous sound of a river. Submerged in its body, Boaz caught the note of the town bell striking midnight.

Once more, after a long time, he heard footfalls. He heard them coming around the corner of the shop from the house, footfalls half swallowed by the wind, passing discreetly, without haste, retreating, merging step by step with the huge, incessant background of the wind.

Boaz's muscles tightened all over him. He had the impulse to start up, to fling open the door, shout into the night, "What are you doing? Stop there! Say! What are you doing and where are you going?"

And as before, the curious impotence of the spectator held him motionless. He had not stirred in his chair. And those footfalls, upon which hinged, as it were, that momentous decade of his life, were gone.

There was nothing to listen for now. Yet he continued to listen. Once or twice, half arousing himself, he drew toward him his unfinished work. And then relapsed into immobility.

As has been said, the wind, making little difference to the ears, made all the difference in the world with the sense of feeling and the sense of smell. From the one important direction of the house. That is how it could come about that Boaz Negro could sit, waiting and listening to nothing in the shop and remain ignorant of disaster until the alarm had gone away and come back again, pounding, shouting, clanging.

"*Fire!*" he heard them bawling in the street. "*Fire! Fire!*"

Only slowly did he understand that the fire was in his own house.

There is nothing stiller in the world than the skeleton of a house in the dawn after a fire. It is as if everything living, positive, violent, had been completely drained in the one flaming act of violence, leaving nothing but negation till the end of time. It is worse than a tomb. A monstrous stillness! Even the footfalls of the searchers can not disturb it, for they are separate and superficial. In its presence they are almost frivolous.

Half an hour after dawn the searchers found the body, if what was left from that consuming ordeal might be called a body. The discovery came as a shock. It seemed incredible that the occupant of that house, no cripple or invalid but an able man in the prime of youth, should not have awakened and made good his escape. It was the upper floor which had caught; the stairs had stood to the last. It was beyond calculation. Even if he had been asleep!

And he had not been asleep. This second and infinitely more appalling discovery began to be known. Slowly. By a hint, a breath of rumour here; there an allusion, half taken back. The man, whose incinerated body still lay curled in its bed of cinders, had been dressed at the moment of disaster; even to the watch, the cuff-buttons, the studs, the very scarf-pin. Fully clothed to the last detail, precisely as those who had dealings at the bank might have seen Campbell Wood any week-day morning for the past eight months. A man does not sleep with his clothes on. The skull of the man had been broken, as if with a blunt instrument of iron. On the charred lacework of the floor lay the leg of an old andiron with which Boaz Negro and his Angelina had set up housekeeping in that new house.

It needed only Mr. Asa Whitelaw, coming up the street from that gaping "Noah's Ark" at the bank, to round out the scandalous circle of circumstance.

"Where is Manuel?"

Boaz Negro still sat in his shop, impassive, monumental, his thick, hairy arms resting on the arms of his chair. The tools and materials of his work remained scattered about him, as his irresolute gathering of the night before had left

them. Into his eyes no change could come. He had lost his house, the visible monument of all those years of "shining his fingers." It would seem that he had lost his son. And he had lost something incalculably precious—that hitherto unquenchable exuberance of the man.

"Where is Manuel?"

When he spoke his voice was unaccented and stale, like the voice of a man already dead.

"Yes, where is Manuel?"

He had answered them with their own question.

"When did you last see him?"

Neither he nor they seemed to take note of that profound irony.

"At supper."

"Tell us, Boaz; you knew about this money?"

The cobbler nodded his head.

"And did Manuel?"

He might have taken sanctuary in a legal doubt. How did he know what Manuel knew? Precisely! As before, he nodded his head.

"After supper, Boaz, you were in the shop? But you heard something?"

He went on to tell them what he had heard: the footfalls, below and above, the extraordinary conversation which had broken for a moment the silence of the inner hall. The account was bare, the phrases monosyllabic. He reported only what had been registered on the sensitive tympanums of his ears, to the last whisper of footfalls stealing past the dark wall of the shop. Of all the formless tangle of thoughts, suspicions, interpretations, and the special and personal knowledge given to the blind which moved in his brain, he said nothing.

He shut his lips there. He felt himself on the defensive. Just as he distrusted the higher ramifications of finance (his house had gone down uninsured), so before the rites and processes of that inscrutable creature, the Law, he felt himself menaced by the invisible and the unknown, helpless, oppressed; in an abject sense, skeptical.

"Keep clear of the Law!" they had told him in his youth. The monster his imagination had summoned up then still stood beside him in his age.

Having exhausted his monosyllabic and superficial evidence, they could move him no farther. He became deaf and dumb. He sat before them, an image cast in some immensely heavy stuff, inanimate. His lack of visible emotion impressed them. Remembering his exuberance, it was only the stranger to see him unmoving and unmoved. Only once did they catch sight of something beyond. As they were preparing to leave he opened his mouth. What he said was like a swan-song to the years of his exuberant happiness. Even now there was no colour of expression in his words, which sounded mechanical.

"Now I have lost everything. My house. My last son. Even my honour. You would not think I would like to live. But I go to live. I go to work. That *cachorra*, one day he shall come back again, in the dark night, to have a look. I shall go to show you all. That *cachorra*!"

(And from that time on, it was noted, he never referred to the fugitive by any other name than *cachorra*, which is a kind of dog. "That *cachorra*!" As if he had forfeited the relationship not only of the family, but of the very genus. the very race! "That *cachorra*!")

He pronounced this resolution without passion. When they assured him that the culprit would come back again indeed, much sooner than he expected, "with a rope around his neck," he shook his head slowly.

"No, you shall not catch that *cachorra* now. But one day——"

There was something about its very colourlessness which made it sound oracular. It was at least prophetic. They searched, laid their traps, proceeded with all their placards, descriptions, rewards, clues, trails. But on Manuel Negro they never laid their hands.

Months passed and became years. Boaz Negro did not rebuild his house. He might have done so, out of his earnings, for upon himself he spent scarcely anything, reverting to his old habit of an almost miserly economy. Yet perhaps it would have been harder after all. For his earnings were less and less. In that town a cobbler who sits in an empty shop is apt to want for trade. Folk take their boots to mend where they take their bodies to rest and their minds to be edified.

No longer did the walls of Boaz's shop resound to the boastful recollections of young men. Boaz had changed. He had become not only different, but opposite. A metaphor will do best. The spirit of Boaz Negro had been a meadowed hillside giving upon the open sea, the sun, the warm, wild winds from beyond the blue horizon. And covered with flowers, always hungry and thirsty for the sun and the fabulous wind and bright showers of rain. It had become an entrenched camp, lying silent, sullen, verdureless, under a gray sky. He stood solitary against the world. His approaches were closed. He was blind, and he was also deaf and dumb.

Against that what can young fellows do who wish for nothing but to rest themselves and talk about their friends and enemies? They had come and they had tried. They had raised their voices even higher than before. Their boasts had grown louder, more presumptuous, more preposterous, until, before the cold separation of that unmoving and as if contemptuous presence in the cobbler's chair, they burst of their own air, like toy balloons. And they went and left Boaz alone.

There was another thing which served, if not to keep them away, at least not to entice them back. That was the aspect of the place. It was not cheerful. It invited no one. In its way that fire-bitten ruin grew to be almost as great a scandal as the act itself had been. 'It was plainly an eyesore. A valuable property, on the town's main thoroughfare—and an eyesore! The neighbouring owners protested.

Their protestations might as well have gone against a stone wall. That man was deaf and dumb. He had become, in a way, a kind of vegetable, for the quality of a vegetable is that, while it is endowed with life, it remains fixed in one spot. For years Boaz was scarcely seen to move foot out of that shop that was left him, a small square, blistered promontory on the shores of ruin.

He must indeed have carried out some rudimentary sort of domestic programme under the débris at the rear (he certainly did not sleep or eat in the shop). One or two lower rooms were left fairly intact. The outward aspect of the place was formless; it grew to be no more than a mound in time; the charred timbers, one or two still standing, lean and naked against the sky, lost their blackness and faded to a

silvery gray. It would have seemed strange, had they not grown accustomed to the thought, to imagine that blind man, like a mole, or some slow slug, turning himself mysteriously in the bowels of that gray mound—that time-silvered “eye-sore.”

When they saw him, however, he was in the shop. They opened the door to take in their work (when other cobblers turned them off), and they saw him seated in his chair in the half darkness, his whole person, legs, torso, neck, head, as motionless as the vegetable of which we have spoken—only his hands and his bare arms endowed with visible life. The gloom had bleached the skin to the colour of damp ivory, and against the background of his immobility they moved with a certain amazing monstrousness, interminably. No, they were never still. One wondered what they could be at. Surely he could not have had enough work now to keep those insatiable hands so monstrously in motion. Even far into the night. Tap-tap-tap! Blows continuous and powerful. On what? On nothing? On the bare iron last? And for what purpose? To what conceivable end?

Well, one could imagine those arms, growing paler, also growing thicker and more formidable with that unceasing labour; the muscles feeding themselves omnivorously on their own waste, the cords toughening, the bone-tissues revitalizing themselves without end. One could imagine the whole aspiration of that mute and motionless man pouring itself out into those pallid arms, and the arms taking it up with a kind of blind greed. Storing it up. Against a day!

“That *cachorra*! One day——”

What were the thoughts of the man? What moved within that motionless cranium covered with long hair? Who can say? Behind everything, of course, stood that bitterness against the world—the blind world—blinder than he would ever be. And against “that *cachorra*.” But this was no longer a thought; it was the man.

Just as all muscular aspiration flowed into his arms, so all the energies of his senses turned to his ears. The man had become, you might say, two arms and two ears. Can you imagine a man listening, intently, through the waking hours of nine years?

Listening to footfalls. Marking with a special emphasis of concentration the beginning, rise, full passage, falling away, and dying of all the footfalls. By day, by night, winter and summer and winter again. Unravelling the skein of footfalls passing up and down the street!

For three years he wondered when they would come. For the next three years he wondered if they would ever come. It was during the last three that a doubt began to trouble him. It gnawed at his huge moral strength. Like a hidden seepage of water, it undermined (in anticipation) his terrible resolution. It was a sign perhaps of age, a slipping away of the reckless infallibility of youth.

Supposing, after all, that his ears should fail him. Supposing they were capable of being tricked, without his being able to know it. Supposing that that *cachorra* should come and go, and he, Boaz, living in some vast delusion, some unrealized distortion of memory, should let him pass unknown. Supposing precisely this thing had already happened!

Or the other way around. What if he should hear the footfalls coming, even into the very shop itself? What if he should be as sure of them as of his own soul? What, then, if he should strike? And what then, if it were not that *cachorra* after all? How many tens and hundreds of millions of people were there in the world? Was it possible for them all to have footfalls distinct and different?

Then they would take him and hang him. And that *cachorra* might then come and go at his own will, undisturbed.

As he sat there sometimes the sweat rolled down his nose, cold as rain.

Supposing!

Sometimes, quite suddenly, in broad day, in the booming silence of the night, he would start. Not outwardly. But beneath the pale integument of his skin all his muscles tightened and his nerves sang. His breathing stopped. It seemed almost as if his heart stopped.

Was that it? Were those the feet, there, emerging faintly from the distance? Yes, there was something about them. Yes! Memory was in travail. Yes, yes, yes! No! How could he be sure? Ice ran down into his empty eyes. The footfalls were already passing. They were gone, swallowed

up already by time and space. Had that been that *cachorra*?

Nothing in his life had been so hard to meet as this insidious drain of distrust in his own powers; this sense of a traitor within the walls. His iron-gray hair had turned white. It was always this now, from the beginning of the day to the end of the night: how was he to know? How was he to be inevitably, unshakably, sure?

Curiously, after all this purgatory of doubts, he did know them. For a moment at least, when he had heard them, he was unshakably sure.

It was on an evening of the winter holidays, the Portuguese festival of *Menin' Jesus*. Christ was born again in a hundred mangers on a hundred tiny altars; there was cake and wine; songs went shouting by to the accompaniment of mandolins and tramping feet. The wind blew cold under a clear sky. In all the houses there were lights; even in Boaz Negro's shop a lamp was lit just now, for a man had been in for a pair of boots which Boaz had patched. The man had gone out again. Boaz was thinking of blowing out the light. It meant nothing to him.

He leaned forward, judging the position of the lamp-chimney by the heat on his face, and puffed out his cheeks to blow. Then his cheeks collapsed suddenly, and he sat back again.

It was not odd that he had failed to hear the footfalls until they were actually within the door. A crowd of merry-makers was passing just then; their songs and tramping almost shook the shop.

Boaz sat back. Beneath his passive exterior his nerves thrummed; his muscles had grown as hard as wood. Yes! Yes! But no! He had heard nothing; no more than a single step, a single foot-pressure on the planks within the door. Dear God! He could not tell!

Going through the pain of an enormous effort, he opened his lips.

"What can I do for you?"

"Well, I—I don't know. To tell the truth——"

The voice was unfamiliar, but it might be assumed. Boaz held himself. His face remained blank, interrogating, slightly helpless.

"I am a little deaf," he said. "Come nearer."

The footfalls came half way across the intervening floor, and there appeared to hesitate. The voice, too, had a note of uncertainty.

"I was just looking around. I have a pair of—well, you mend shoes?"

Boaz nodded his head. It was not in response to the words, for they meant nothing. What he had heard was the footfalls on the floor.

Now he was sure. As has been said, for a moment at least after he had heard them he was unshakably sure. The congestion of his muscles had passed. He was at peace.

The voice became audible once more. Before the massive preoccupation of the blind man it became still less certain of itself.

"Well, I haven't got the shoes with me. I was—just looking around."

It was amazing to Boaz, this miraculous sensation of peace.

"Wait!" Then, bending his head as if listening to the winter wind, "It's cold to-night. You've left the door open. But wait!" Leaning down, his hand fell on a rope's end hanging by the chair. The gesture was one continuous, undeviating movement of the hand. No hesitation. No groping. How many hundreds, how many thousands of times, had his hand schooled itself in that gesture!

A single strong pull. With a little *bang* the front door had swung to and latched itself. Not only the front door. The other door, leading to the rear, had closed too and latched itself with a little *bang*. And leaning forward from his chair, Boaz blew out the light.

There was not a sound in the shop. Outside, feet continued to go by, ringing on the frozen road; voices were lifted; the wind hustled about the corners of the wooden shell with a continuous, shrill note of whistling. All of this outside, as on another planet. Within the blackness of the shop the complete silence persisted,

Boaz listened. Sitting on the edge of his chair, half-crouching, his head, with its long, unkempt, white hair, bent slightly to one side, he concentrated upon this chambered silence the full powers of his senses. He hardly breathed.

The other person in that room could not be breathing at all, it seemed.

No, there was not a breath, not the stirring of a sole on wood, not the infinitesimal rustle of any fabric. It was as if in this utter stoppage of sound, even the blood had ceased to flow in the veins and arteries of that man, who was like a rat caught in a trap.

It was appalling even to Boaz; even to the cat. Listening became more than a labour. He began to have to fight against a growing impulse to shout out loud, to leap, sprawl forward without aim in that unstirred darkness—do something. Sweat rolled down from behind his ears, into his shirt-collar. He gripped the chair-arms. To keep quiet he sank his teeth into his lower lip. He would not! He would not!

And of a sudden he heard before him, in the centre of the room, an outburst of breath, an outrush from lungs in the extremity of pain, thick, laborious, fearful. A coughing up of dammed air.

Pushing himself from the arms of the chair, Boaz leaped.

His fingers, passing swiftly through the air, closed on something. It was a sheaf of hair, bristly and thick. It was a man's beard.

On the road outside, up and down the street for a hundred yards, merry-making people turned to look at one another. With an abrupt cessation of laughter, of speech. Inquiringly. Even with an unconscious dilation of the pupils of their eyes.

"What was that?"

There had been a scream. There could be no doubt of that. A single, long-drawn note. Immensely high-pitched. Not as if it were human.

"God's sake! What was that? Where'd it come from?"

Those nearest said it came from the cobbler-shop of Boaz Negro.

They went and tried the door. It was closed; even locked, as if for the night. There was no light behind the window-shade. But Boaz would not have a light. They beat on the door. No answer.

But from where, then, had that prolonged, as if animal, note come?

They ran about, penetrating into the side lanes, interrogating, prying. Coming back at last, inevitably, to the neighbourhood of Boaz Negro's shop.

The body lay on the floor at Boaz's feet, where it had tumbled down slowly after a moment from the spasmodic embrace of his arms; those ivory-coloured arms which had beaten so long upon the bare iron surface of a last. Blows continuous and powerful. It seemed incredible. They were so weak now. They could not have lifted the hammer now.

But that beard! That brist'ly, thick, square beard of a stranger!

His hands remembered it. Standing with his shoulders fallen forward and his weak arms hanging down, Boaz began to shiver. The whole thing was incredible. What was on the floor there, upheld in the vast gulf of darkness, he could not see. Neither could he hear it; smell it. Nor (if he did not move his foot) could he feel it. What he did not hear, smell, or touch did not exist. It was not there. Incredible!

But that beard! All the accumulated doubtings of those years fell down upon him. After all, the thing he had been so fearful of in his weak imaginings had happened. He had killed a stranger. He, Boaz Negro, had murdered an innocent man!

And all on account of that beard. His deep panic made him light-headed. He began to confuse cause and effect. If it were not for that beard, it would have been that *cachorra*.

On this basis he began to reason with a crazy directness. And to act. He went and pried open the door into the entry. From a shelf he took down his razor. A big, heavy-heeled strop. His hands began to hurry. And the mug, half full of soap. And water. It would have to be cold water. But after all, he thought (light-headedly), at this time of night——

Outside, they were at the shop again. The crowd's habit is to forget a thing quickly, once it is out of sight and hearing. But there had been something about that solitary cry which continued to bother them, even in memory. Where had it been? Where had it come from? And those who had stood nearest the cobbler-shop were heard again. They were certain now, dead certain. They could swear!

In the end they broke down the door.

If Boaz heard them he gave no sign. An absorption as complete as it was monstrous wrapped him. Kneeling in the glare of the lantern they had brought, as impervious as his own shadow sprawling behind him, he continued to shave the dead man on the floor.

No one touched him. Their minds and imaginations were arrested by the gigantic proportions of the act. The unfathomable presumption of the act. As throwing murder in their faces to the tune of a jig in a barber-shop. It is a fact that none of them so much as thought of touching him. No less than all of them, together with all other men, shorn of their imaginations—that is to say, the expressionless and imperturbable creature of the Law—would be sufficient to touch that ghastly man.

On the other hand, they could not leave him alone. They could not go away. They watched. They saw the damp, lather-soaked beard of that victimized stranger falling away, stroke by stroke of the flashing, heavy razor. The dead denuded by the blind!

It was seen that Boaz was about to speak. It was something important he was about to utter; something, one would say, fatal. The words would not come all at once. They swelled his cheeks out. His razor was arrested. Lifting his face, he encircled the watchers with a gaze at once of imploration and of command. As if he could see them. As if he could read his answer in the expressions of their faces.

"Tell me one thing now. Is it that *cachorra*?"

For the first time those men in the room made sounds. They shuffled their feet. It was as if an uncontrollable impulse to ejaculation, laughter, derision, forbidden by the presence of death, had gone down into their boot-soles.

"Manuel?" one of them said. "You mean *Manuel*?"

Boaz laid the razor down on the floor beside its work. He got up from his knees slowly, as if his joints hurt. He sat down in his chair, rested his hands on the arms, and once more encircled the company with his sightless gaze.

"Not Manuel. Manuel was a good boy. But tell me now, is it that *cachorra*?"

Here was something out of their calculations; something for them, mentally, to chew on. Mystification is a good

thing sometimes. It gives the brain a fillip, stirs memory, puts the gears of imagination in mesh. One man, an old, tobacco-chewing fellow, began to stare harder at the face on the floor. Something moved in his intellect.

"No, but look here now, by God——"

He had even stopped chewing. But he was forestalled by another.

"Say now, if it don't look like that fellow Wood, himself. The bank fellow—that was burned—remember? Himself."

"That *cachorra* was not burned. Not that Wood. You darned fool!"

Boaz spoke from his chair. They hardly knew his voice, emerging from its long silence; it was so didactic and arid.

"That *cachorra* was not burned. It was my boy that was burned. It was that *cachorra* called my boy upstairs. That *cachorra* killed my boy. That *cachorra* put his clothes on my boy, and he set my house on fire. I knew that all the time. Because when I heard those feet come out of my house and go away, I knew they were the feet of that *cachorra* from the bank. I did not know where he was going to. Something said to me—you better ask him where he is going to. But then I said, you are foolish. He had the money from the bank. I did not know. And then my house was on fire. No, it was not my boy that went away; it was that *cachorra* all the time. You darned fools! Did you think I was waiting for my own boy?

"Now I show you all," he said at the end. "And now I can get hanged."

No one ever touched Boaz Negro for that murder. For murder it was in the eye and letter of the Law. The Law in a small town is sometimes a curious creature; it is sometimes blind only in one eye.

Their minds and imaginations in that town were arrested by the romantic proportions of the act. Simply, no one took it up. I believe the man, Wood, was understood to have died of heart-failure.

When they asked Boaz why he had not told what he knew as to the identity of that fugitive in the night, he seemed to find it hard to say exactly. How could a man of no education define for them his own but half-denied misgivings about the

Law, his sense of oppression, constraint and awe, of being on the defensive, even, in an abject way, his skepticism? About his wanting, come what might, to "keep clear of the Law"?

He did say this, "You would have laughed at me."

And this, "If I told folk it was Wood went away, then I say he would not dare come back again."

That was the last. Very shortly he began to refuse to talk about the thing at all. The act was completed. Like the creature of fable, it had consumed itself. Out of that old man's consciousness it had departed. Amazingly. Like a dream dreamed out.

Slowly at first, in a makeshift, piece-at-a-time, poor man's way, Boaz commenced to rebuild his house. That "eye-sore" vanished.

And slowly at first, like the miracle of a green shoot pressing out from the dead earth, that priceless and unquenchable exuberance of the man was seen returning. Unquenchable, after all.

THE LAST ROOM OF ALL

BY STEPHEN FRENCH WHITMAN

From Harper's Monthly Magazine

IN THOSE days all Italy was in turmoil and Lombardy lay covered with blood and fire. The emperor, the second Frederick of Swabia, was out to conquer once for all. His man Salinguerra held the town of Ferrara. The Marquis Azzo, being driven forth, could slake his rage only on such outlying castles as favoured the imperial cause.

Of these castles the Marquis Azzo himself sacked and burned many. But against the castle of Grangioia, remote in the hills, he sent his captain, Lapo Cercamorte.

This Lapo Cercamorte was nearly forty years old, a warrior from boyhood, uncouth, barbaric, ferocious. One could think of no current danger that he had not encountered, no horror that he had not witnessed. His gaunt face was dull red, as if baked by the heat of blazing towns. His coarse black hair had been thinned by the friction of his helmet. His nose was broken, his arms and legs were covered with scars, and under his chin ran a seam made by a woman who had tried to cut off his head while he lay asleep. From this wound Lapo Cercamorte's voice was husky and uncertain.

With a hundred men at his back he rode by night to Grangioia Castle. As day was breaking, by a clever bit of stratagem he rushed the gate.

Then in that towering, thick-walled fortress, which had suddenly become a trap, sounded the screaming of women, the boom of yielding doors, the clang of steel on black staircases, the battlecries, wild songs, and laughter of Lapo Cercamorte's soldiers.

He found the family at bay in their hall, the father and his three sons naked except for the shirts of mail that they had

hastily slipped on. Behind these four huddled the Grangioia women and children, for the most part pallid from fury rather than from fear, silently awaiting the end.

However, Cercamorte's purpose was not to destroy this clan, but to force it into submission to his marquis. So, when he had persuaded them to throw down their swords, he put off his flat-topped helmet and seated himself with the Grangioia men.

A bargain ensued; he gave them their lives in exchange for their allegiance. And it would have ended there had not the sun, reaching in through a casement toward the group of silent women, touched the face of old Grangioia's youngest daughter, Madonna Gemma.

From the crown of her head, whence her hair fell in bright ripples like a gush of gold from the ladle of a goldsmith, to her white feet, bare on the pavement, Madonna Gemma was one fragile piece of beauty. In this hall heavy with torch smoke, and the sweat of many soldiers, in this ring of blood-stained weapons and smouldering eyes, she appeared like a delicate dreamer enveloped by a nightmare. Yet even the long stare of Lapo Cercamorte she answered with a look of defiance.

The conqueror rose, went jingling to her, thumbed a strand of her bright hair, touched her soft cheek with his fingers, which smelled of leather and horses. Grasping her by the elbow, he led her forward.

"Is this your daughter, Grangioia? Good. I will take her as a pledge of your loyalty."

With a gesture old Grangioia commanded his sons to sit still. After glowering round him at the wall of mail, he let his head sink down, and faltered:

"Do you marry her, Cercamorte?"

"Why not?" croaked Lapo. "Having just made a peace shall I give offence so soon? No, in this case I will do everything according to honour."

That morning Lapo Cercamorte espoused Madonna Gemma Grangioia. Then, setting her behind his saddle on a cushion, he took her away to his own castle. This possession, too, he had won for himself with his sword. It was called the Vespaione, the Big Hornets' Nest. Rude and strong, it crowned a rocky hilltop in a lonely region. At the base of

the hill clustered a few huts; beyond lay some little fields; then the woods spread their tangles afar.

Madonna Gemma, finding herself in this prison, did not weep or utter a sound for many days.

Here Lapo Cercamorte, pouncing upon such a treasure as had never come within his reach before, met his first defeat. His fire proved unable to melt that ice. His coarse mind was benumbed by the exquisiteness of his antagonist. Now, instead of terror and self-abasement, he met scorn—the cold contempt of a being rarefied, and raised above him by centuries of gentler thought and living. When he laid his paws on her shoulders he felt that he held there a pale, soft shell empty of her incomprehensible spirit, which at his touch had vanished into space.

So he stood baffled, with a new longing that groped blindly through the veils of flesh and blood, like a brute tormented by the dawning of some insatiable aspiration.

It occurred to him that the delicate creature might be pleased if her surroundings were less soldierly. So oiled linen was stretched across her windows, and a carpet laid for her feet at table in the hall. The board was spread with a white cloth on which she might wipe her lips, and in spring the pavement of her bower was strewn with scented herbs. Also he saw to it that her meat was seasoned with quinces, that her wine was spiced on feast-days.

He got her a little greyhound, but it sickened and died. Remembering that a comrade-in-arms possessed a Turkish dwarf with an abnormally large head, he cast about to procure some such monstrosity for her amusement. He sent her jewellery—necklaces torn by his soldiers from the breasts of ladies in surrendered towns, rings wrested from fingers raised in supplication.

She wore none of these trinkets. Indeed, she seemed oblivious of all his efforts to change her.

He left her alone.

Finally, whenever Lapo Cercamorte met her in the hall his face turned dark and bitter. Throughout the meal there was no sound except the growling of dogs among the bones beneath the table, the hushed voices of the soldiers eating in the body of the hall. Old one-eyed Baldo, Cercamorte's

lieutenant, voiced the general sentiment when he muttered into his cup:

"This house has become a tomb, and I have a feeling that presently there may be corpses in it."

"She has the evil eye," another assented.

Furtively making horns with their fingers, they looked up askance toward the dais, at her pale young beauty glimmering through rays of dusty sunshine.

"Should there come an alarm our shield-straps would burst and our weapons crack like glass. If only, when we took Grangioia Castle, a sword had accidentally cut off her nose!"

"God give us our next fighting in the open, far away from this *jettatrice*!"

It presently seemed as if that wish were to be granted. All the Guelph party were then preparing to take the field together. In Cercamorte's castle, dice-throwing and drinking gave place to drinking and plotting. Strange messengers appeared. In an upper chamber a shabby priest from the nearest town—the stronghold of Count Nicolotto Muti—neatly wrote down, at Lapo's dictation, the tally of available men, horses, and arms. Then one morning Cercamorte said to Baldo, his lieutenant:

"I am off for a talk with Nicolotto Muti. The house is in your care."

And glumly Lapo rode down from his castle, without a glance toward the casements of Madonna Gemma's bower.

She watched him depart alone, his helmet dangling from his saddle-bow. Then she saw, below her on the hillside, also watching him, the horse-boy, Foresto, his graceful figure hinting at an origin superior to his station, his dark, peaked face seeming to mask some avid and sinister dream. Was she wrong in suspecting that Foresto hated Lapo Cercamorte? Might he not become an ally against her husband?

Her gaze travelled on to the houses at the foot of the hill, to the hut where, under Lapo's protection, dwelt a renegade Arabian, reputed to be a sorcerer. No doubt the Arabian knew of subtle poisons, charms that withered men's bodies, enchantments that wrecked the will and reduced the mind to chaos.

But soon these thoughts were scattered by the touch of the

spring breeze. She sank into a vague wonder at life, which had so cruelly requited the fervours of her girlhood.

On the third day of Cercamorte's absence, while Madonna Gemma was leaning on the parapet of the keep, there appeared at the edge of the woods a young man in light-blue tunic and hood, a small gilded harp under his arm.

Because he was the young brother of Nicolotto Muti they admitted him into the castle.

His countenance was effeminate, fervent, and artful. The elegance of his manner was nearly Oriental. The rough soldiers grinned in amusement, or frowned in disgust. Madonna Gemma, confronted by his strangeness and complexity, neither frowned nor smiled, but looked more wan than ever.

Perfumed with sandalwood, in a white, gold-stitched robe, its bodice tight, its skirts voluminous, she welcomed him in the hall. The reception over, old Baldo spoke with the crone who served Madonna Gemma as maid:

"I do not know what this pretty little fellow has in mind. While I watch him for spying, do you watch him for love-making. If we discover him at either, perhaps he has caught that new green-sickness from the north, and thinks himself a singing-bird."

A singing-bird was what Raffaele Muti proved to be.

In the Mediterranean lands a new idea was beginning to alter the conduct of society. Woman, so long regarded as a soulless animal, born only to drag men down, was being transfigured into an immaculate goddess, an angel in human shape, whose business was man's reformation, whose right was man's worship.

That cult of Woman had been invented by the lute-playing nobles of Provence. But quickly it had begun to spread from court to court, from one land to another. So now, in Italy, as in southern France, sometimes in wild hill castles as well as in the city palaces, a hymn of adoration rose to the new divinity.

This was the song that Raffaele Muti, plucking at his twelve harp strings, raised in the hall of the Big Hornets' Nest at twilight.

He sat by the fireplace on the guests' settee, beside Ma-

donna Gemma. The torches, dripping fire in the wall-rings, cast their light over the faces of the wondering servants. The harp twanged its plaintive interlude; then the song continued, quavering, soaring, athrob with this new pathos and reverence, that had crept like the counterfeit of a celestial dawn upon a world long obscured by a brutish dusk.

Raffaele Muti sang of a woman exalted far above him by her womanhood, which rivalled Godhood in containing all the virtues requisite for his redemption. Man could no longer sin when once she had thought pityingly of him. Every deed must be noble if rooted in love of her. All that one asked was to worship her ineffable superiority. How grievously should one affront her virtue if ever one dreamed of kisses! But should one dream of them, pray God she might never stoop that far in mercy! No, passion must never mar this shrine at which Raffaele knelt.

In the ensuing silence, which quivered from that cry, there stole into the heart of Madonna Gemma an emotion more precious, just then, than the peace that follows absolute—a new-born sense of feminine dignity, a glorious blossoming of pride, commingled with the tenderness of an immeasurable gratitude.

About to part for the night, they exchanged a look of tremulous solemnity.

Her beauty was no longer bleak, but rich—all at once too warm, perhaps, for a divinity whose only office was the guidance of a troubadour toward asceticism. His frail comeliness was radiant from his poetical ecstasy—of a sudden too flushed, one would think, for a youth whose aspirations were all toward the intangible. Then each emerged with a start from that delicious spell, to remember the staring servants.

They said good-night. Madonna Gemma ascended to her chamber.

It was the horse-boy Foresto who, with a curious solicitude and satisfaction, lighted Raffaele Muti up to bed.

But old Baldo, strolling thoughtfully in the courtyard, caught a young cricket chirping in the grass between two paving-stones. On the cricket's back, with a straw and white paint, he traced the Muti device—a tree transfixed by an arrow. Then he put the cricket into a little iron box to-

gether with a rose, and gave the box to a man-at-arms, saying:

"Ride to Lapo Cercamorte and deliver this into his hands."

Next day, on the sunny tower, high above the hillside covered with spring flowers, Raffaele resumed his song. He sat at the feet of Madonna Gemma, who wore a grass-green gown embroidered with unicorns, emblems of purity. The crone was there also, pretending to doze in the shadows; and so was Foresto the horse-boy, whose dark, still face seemed now and again to mirror Raffaele's look of exultation—a look that came only when Madonna Gemma gazed away from him.

But for the most part she gazed down at Raffaele's singing lips, on which she discerned no guile.

Tireless, he sang to her of a world fairer even than that of her maidenhood. It was a region where for women all feeling of abasement ceased, because there the troubadour, by his homage, raised one's soul high above the tyranny of uncomprehending husbands.

She learned—for so it had been decided in Provence—that high sentiment was impossible in wedlock at its best; that between husband and wife there was no room for love. Thus, according to the *Regula Amoris*, it was not only proper, but also imperative, to seek outside the married life some lofty love-alliance.

The day wore on thus. The sun had distilled from many blossoms the whole intoxicating fragrance of the springtime. A golden haze was changing Madonna Gemma's prison into a paradise.

Her vision was dimmed by a glittering film of tears. Her fingers helplessly unfolded on her lap. She believed that at last she had learned love's meaning. And Raffaele, for all his youth no novice at this game, believed that this dove, too, was fluttering into his cage.

By sunset their cheeks were flaming. At twilight their hands turned cold.

Then they heard the bang of the gate and the croaking voice of Lapo Cercamorte.

He entered the hall as he had so often entered the houses

of terror-stricken enemies, clashing at each ponderous, swift step, his mail dusty, his hair wet and dishevelled, his dull-red face resembling a mask of heated iron. That atmosphere just now swimming in languor, was instantly permeated by a wave of force, issuing from this herculean body and barbaric brain. When he halted before those two they seemed to feel the heat that seethed in his steel-bound breast.

His disfigured face still insolvable, Lapo Cercamorte plunged his stare into Madonna Gemma's eyes, then looked into the eyes of Raffaele. His hoarse voice broke the hush, he said to the young man:

"So you are the sister of my friend Count Nicolloto?"

Raffaele, having licked his lips, managed to answer:

"You mean his brother, sir."

Lapo Cercamorte laughed loud; but his laugh was the bark of a hyena, and his eyes were balls of fire.

"No! with these legs and ringlets? Come here, Baldo. Here is a girl who says she is a man. What do you say, to speak only of this pretty skin of hers?"

And with his big hand suddenly he ripped open Raffaele's tunic half way to the waist, exposing the fair white flesh. The troubadour, though quivering with shame and rage, remained motionless, staring at the great sword that hung in its scarlet sheath from Lapo's harness.

Old one-eyed Baldo, plucking his master by the elbow, whispered: "Take care, Cercamorte. His brother Nicolotto is your ally. Since after all, nothing much has happened, do not carry the offence too far."

"Are you in your dotage?" Lapo retorted, still glaring with a dreadful interest at Raffaele's flesh. "Do you speak of giving offence, when all I desire is to be as courteous as my uneducated nature will allow? She must pardon me that slip of the hand; I meant only to stroke her cheek in compliment but instead I tore her dress. Yet I will be a proper courtier to her still. Since she is now set on going home, I myself, alone, will escort her clear to the forest, in order to set her upon the safe road."

And presently Madonna Gemma, peering from her chamber window, saw her husband, with a ghastly pretense of care, lead young Raffaele Muti down the hill into the darkness from which there came never a sound.

It was midnight when Lapo Cercamorte rëntered the castle, and called for food and drink.

Now the shadow over the Big Hornets' Nest obscured even the glare of the summer sun. No winsome illusion of nature's could brighten this little world that had at last turned quite sinister. In the air that Madonna Gemma breathed was always a chill of horror. At night the thick walls seemed to sweat with it, and the silence was like a great hand pressed across a mouth struggling to give vent to a scream.

At dinner in the hall she ate nothing, but drank her wine as though burning with a fever. Sometimes, when the stillness had become portentous, Lapo rolled up his sleeves, inspected his scarred, swarthy arms, and mumbled, with the grin of a man stretched on the rack:

"Ah, Father and Son! if only one had a skin as soft, white, and delicate as a girl's!"

At this Madonna Gemma left the table.

Once more her brow became bleaker than a winter mountain; her eyes were haggard from nightmares; she trembled at every sound. Pacing her bower, interminably she asked herself one question. And at last, when Lapo would have passed her on the stairs, she hurled into his face:

"What did you do to Raffaele Muti?"

He started, so little did he expect to hear her voice. His battered countenance turned redder, as he noted that for the sake of the other she was like an overstretched bow, almost breaking. Then a pang stabbed him treacherously. Fearing that she might discern his misery, he turned back, leaving her limp against the wall.

He took to walking the runway of the ramparts, gnawing his fingers and muttering to himself, shaking his tousled hair. With a sigh, as if some thoughts were too heavy a burden for that iron frame, he sat down on an archer's ledge, to stare toward the hut of the renegade Arabian. Often at night he sat thus, hour after hour, a coarse creature made romantic by a flood of moonlight. And as he bowed his head the sentinel heard him fetch a groan such as one utters whose life escapes through a sword-wound.

One-eyed Baldo also groaned at these goings-on, and swal-

lowed many angry speeches. But Foresto the horse-boy began to hum at his work.

This Foresto had attached himself to Lapo's force in the Ferrarese campaign. His habits were solitary. Often when his work was done he wandered into the woods to return with a capful of berries or a squirrel that he had snared. Because he was silent, deft, and daintier than a horse-boy ought to be, Lapo finally bade him serve Madonna Gemma.

Watching his dark, blank face as he strewed fresh herbs on her pavement, she wondered:

"Does he know the truth?"

Their glances met; he seemed to send her a veiled look of comprehension and promise. But whenever he appeared the crone was there.

One morning however, Foresto had time to whisper:

"The Arabian."

What did that mean? Was the Arab magician, recluse in his wretched hut below the castle, prepared to serve her? Was it through him and Foresto that she might hope to escape or at least to manage some revenge? Thereafter she often watched the renegade's window, from which, no matter how late the hour, shone a glimmering of lamplight. Was he busy at his magic? Could those spells be enlisted on her side?

Then, under an ashen sky of autumn, as night was creeping in, she saw the Arabian ascending the hill to the castle. His tall figure, as fleshless as a mummy's, was swathed in a white robe like a winding sheet; his beaked face and hollow eye-sockets were like a vision of Death. Without taking her eyes from him, Madonna Gemma crossed herself.

Baldo came to the gate. The ghostly Arabian uttered.:

"Peace be with you. I have here, under my robe, a packet for your master."

"Good! Pass it over to me, unless it will turn my nose into a carrot, or add a tail to my spine."

The foreigner, shaking his skull-like head, responded:

"I must give this packet into no hands but his."

So Baldo led the sorcerer to Cercamorte, and for a long while those two talked together in private.

Next day Madonna Gemma noted that Lapo had on a new.

short, sleeveless surcoat, or vest, of whitish leather, trimmed on its edges with vair, and laced down the sides with tinsel. In this festive garment, so different from his usual attire, the grim tyrant was ill at ease, secretly anxious, almost timid. Avoiding her eye, he assumed an elaborate carelessness, like that of a boy who had been up to some deviltry. Madonna Gemma soon found herself connecting this change in him with the fancy white-leather vest.

In the hall, while passing a platter of figs, Foresto praised the new garment obsequiously. He murmured:

"And what a fine skin it is made of! So soft, so delicate, so lustrous in its finish! Is it pigskin, master? Ah, no; it is finer than that. Kidskin? But a kid could not furnish a skin as large as this one. No doubt it is made from some queer foreign animal, perhaps from a beast of Greece or Arabia?"

While speaking these words, Foresto flashed one look, mournful and eloquent, at Madonna Gemma, then softly withdrew from the hall.

She sat motionless, wave after wave of cold flowing in through her limbs to her heart. She stared, as though at a basilisk, at Lapo's new vest, in which she seemed to find the answer so long denied her. The hall grew dusky; she heard a far-off cry, and when she meant to flee, she fainted in her chair.

For a week Madonna Gemma did not rise from her bed. When finally she did rise she refused to leave her room.

But suddenly Lapo Cercamorte was gayer than he had been since the fall of Grangioia Castle. Every morning, when he had inquired after Madonna Gemma's health, and had sent her all kinds of tidbits, he went down to sit among his men, to play morra, to test swordblades, to crack salty jokes, to let loose his husky guffaw. At times, cocking his eye toward certain upper casements, he patted his fine vest furtively, with a gleeful and mischievous grin. To Baldo, after some mysterious nods and winks, he confided:

"Everything will be different when she is well again."

"No doubt," snarled old Baldo, scrubbing at his mail shirt viciously. "Though I am not in your confidence, I agree that a nice day is coming, a beautiful day—like a pig. Look you, Cercamorte, shake off this strange spell of folly. Pre-

pare for early trouble. Just as a Venetian sailor can feel a storm of water brewing, so can I feel, gathering far off, a storm of arrows. Do you notice that the crows hereabouts have never been so thick? Perhaps, too, I have seen a face peeping out of the woods, about the time that Foresto goes down to pick berries."

"You chatter like an old woman at a fountain," said Lapo, still caressing his vest with his palms. "I shall be quite happy soon—yes, even before the Lombard league takes the field."

Baldo raised his shoulders, pressed his withered eyelids together, and answered, in disgust:

"God pity you, Cercamorte! You are certainly changed these days. Evidently your Arabian has given you a charm that turns men's brains into goose-eggs."

Lapo stamped away angrily, yet he was soon smiling again.

And now his coarse locks were not unkempt, but cut square across brow and neck. Every week he trimmed his fingernails; every day or so, with a flush and a hangdog look, he drenched himself with perfume. Even while wearing that garment—at thought of which Madonna Gemma, isolate in her chamber, still shivered and moaned—Cercamorte resembled one who prepares himself for a wedding, or gallant rendezvous, that may take place any moment.

Sometimes, reeking with civet-oil, he crept to her door, eavesdropped, pondered the quality of her sighs, stood hesitant, then stealthily withdrew, grinding his teeth and wheezing:

"Not yet. Sweet saints in heaven, what a time it takes!"

He loathed his bed, because of the long hours of sleeplessness. He no longer slept naked. At night, too, his body was encased in the vest of whitish soft skin.

One morning a horseman in green and yellow scallops appeared before the castle. It was Count Nicolotto Muti, elder brother of the troubadour Raffaele.

Lapo, having arranged his features, came down to meet the count. They kissed, and entered the keep with their arms round each other's shoulders. Foresto brought in the guest-cup:

Nicolotto Muti was a thin, calm politician, elegant in his

manners and speech, his lips always wearing a sympathetic smile. By the fireplace, after chatting of this and that, he remarked, with his hand affectionately on Cercamorte's knee:

"I am trying to find trace of my little Raffaele, who has vanished like a mist. It is said that he was last seen in this neighbourhood. Can you tell me anything?"

Lapo, his face expressionless, took thought, then carefully answered:

"Muti, because we are friends as well as allies I will answer you honestly. Returning from my visit with you, I found him in this hall, plucking a harp and singing love-songs to my wife. I say frankly that if he had not been your brother I should have cut off his hands and his tongue. Instead, I escorted him to the forest, and set him on the home road. I admit that before I parted from him I preached him a sermon on the duties of boys toward the friends of their families. Nay, fearing that he might not relate his adventure to you, in that discourse I somewhat pounded the pulpit. Well, yes, I confess that I gave him a little spanking."

Count Nicolotto, without showing any surprise, or losing his fixed smile, declared:

"Dear comrade, it was a young man, not a child, whom you chastised in that way. In another instance, as of course you know, such an action would have been a grievous insult to all his relatives. Besides, I am sure that he meant no more than homage to your lady—a compliment common enough in these modern times, and honourably reflected upon the husband. However, I can understand the feelings of one who has been too much in the field to learn those innocent new gallantries. Indeed, I presume that I should thank you for what you believed to be a generous forbearance. But all this does not find me my brother."

And with a sad, gentle smile Count Nicolotto closed his frosty eyes.

Cercamorte, despite all this cooing, received an impression of enmity. As always when danger threatened, he became still and wary, much more resourceful than ordinarily, as if perils were needed to render him complete. Smoothing his vest with his fingers that were flattened from so much sword-work, Lapo said:

"I feel now that I may have been wrong to put such shame upon him. On account of it, no doubt, he has sought retirement. Or maybe he has journeyed abroad, say to Provence, a land free from such out-of-date bunglers as I."

Nicolotto Muti made a deprecatory gesture, then rose with a rustle of his green and yellow scallops, from which was shaken a fragrance of attar.

"My good friend, let us hope so."

It was Foresto who, in the courtyard held Muti's stirrup, and secretly pressed into the visitor's hand a pellet of parchment. For Foresto could write excellent Latin.

No sooner had Count Nicolotto regained his strong town than a shocking rumour spread round—Lapo Cercamorte had made Raffaele Muti's skin into a vest, with which to drive his wife mad.

In those petty Guelph courts, wherever the tender lore of Provence had sanctified the love of troubadour for great lady, the noblemen cried out in fury; the noblewomen, transformed into tigresses, demanded Lapo's death. Old Grangioia and his three sons arrived at the Muti fortress raving for sudden vengeance. There they were joined by others, rich troubadours, backed by many lances, whose rage could not have been hotter had Lapo, that "wild beast in human form," defaced the Holy Sepulchre. At last the Marquis Azzo was forced to reflect:

"Cercamorte has served me well, but if I keep them from him our league may be torn asunder. Let them have him. But he will die hard."

Round the Big Hornets' Nest the crows were thicker than ever.

One cold, foggy evening Lapo Cercamorte at last pushed open his wife's chamber door. Madonna Gemma was alone, wrapped in a fur-lined mantle, warming her hands over an earthen pot full of embers. Standing awkwardly before her, Lapo perceived that her beauty was fading away in this unhappy solitude. On her countenance was no trace of that which he had hoped to see. He swore softly, cast down from feverish expectancy into bewilderment.

"No," he said, at length, his voice huskier than usual, "this cannot continue. You are a flower transplanted into

a dungeon, and dying on the stalk. One cannot refashion the past. The future remains. Perhaps you would flourish again if I sent you back to your father?"

He went to the casement with a heavy step, and stared through a rent in the oiled linen at the mist, which clung round the castle like a pall.

"Madonna," he continued, more harshly than ever, in order that she might not rejoice at his pain, "I ask pardon for the poorness of my house. Even had my sword made me wealthy I should not have known how to provide appointments pleasing to a delicate woman. My manners also, as I have learned since our meeting, are unsuitable. The camps were my school and few ladies came into them. It was not strange that when Raffaele Muti presented himself you should have found him more to your taste. But if on my sudden return I did what I did, and thus prevented him from boasting up and down Lombardy of another conquest, it was because I had regard not only for my honour, but for yours. So I am not asking your pardon on that score."

Lowering her face toward the red embers, she whispered:

"A beast believes all men to be beasts."

"Kiss of Judas! Are women really trapped, then, by that gibberish? Madonna, these miaowing troubadours have concocted a world that they themselves will not live in. Have I not sat swigging in tents with great nobles, and heard all the truth about it? Those fellows always have, besides the lady that they pretend to worship as inviolate, a dozen others with whom the harp-twanging stage is stale."

"All false, every word," Madonna Gemma answered.

"Because ladies choose to think so the game goes on. Well, Madonna, remember this. From the moment when I first saw you I, at least, did you no dishonour, but married you promptly, and sought your satisfaction by the means that I possessed. I was not unaware that few wives come to their husbands with affection. Certainly I did not expect affection from you at the first, but hoped that it might ensue. So even Lapo Cercamorte became a flabby fool, when he met one in comparison with whom all other women seemed mawkish. Since it was such a fit of drivelling, let us put an end to it. At sunrise the horses will be ready. Good night."

Leaving her beside the dying embers, he went out upon the

ramparts. The fog was impenetrable; one could not even see the light in the sorcerer's window.

"Damned Arabian!" growled Lapo, brandishing his fist. He sat down beside the gate-tower, and rested his chin on his hands.

"How cold it is," he thought, "how lonely and dismal! Warfare is what I need. Dear Lord, let me soon be killing men briskly, and warming myself in the burning streets of Ferrara. That is what I was begotten for. I have been lost in a maze."

Dawn approached, and Lapo was still dozing beside the gate-tower.

With the first hint of light the sentinel challenged; voices answered outside the gate. It was old Grangioia and his sons, calling up that they had come to visit their daughter.

"Well arrived," Lapo grunted, his brain and body sluggish from the chill. He ordered the gate swung open.

Too late, as they rode into the courtyard, he saw that there were nearly a score of them, all with their helmets on. Then in the fog he heard a noise like an avalanche of ice—the clatter of countless steel-clad men scrambling up the hillside.

While running along the wall, Lapo Cercamorte noted that the horsemen were hanging back, content to hold the gate till reinforced. On each side of the courtyard his soldiers were tumbling out of their barracks and fleeing toward the keep, that inner stronghold which was now their only haven. Dropping at last from the ramparts, he joined this retreat. But on gaining the keep he found with him only some thirty of his men; the rest had been caught in their beds.

Old Baldo gave him a coat of mail. Young Foresto brought him his sword and shield. Climbing the keep-wall, Cercamorte squinted down into the murky courtyard. That whole place now swarmed with his foes.

Arrows began to fly. A round object sailed through the air and landed in the keep; it was the head of the Arabian.

"Who are these people?" asked Baldo, while rapidly shooting at them with a bow. "There seem to be many knights; half the shields carry devices. Ai! they have fired the barracks. Now we shall make them out."

The flames leaped up in great sheets, producing the effect of an infernal noon. The masses in the courtyard, inhuman-

looking in their ponderous, barrel-shaped helmets, surged forward at the keep with a thunderous outcry:

"Grangioia! Grangioia! Havoc on Cercamorte!"

"Muti! Muti! Havoc on Cercamorte!"

"God and the Monfalcone!"

"Strike for Zaladino! Havoc on Cercamorte!"

Lapo bared his teeth at them. "By the Five Wounds! half of Lombardy seems to be here. Well, my Baldo, before they make an end of us shall we show them some little tricks?"

"You have said it, Cercamorte. One more good scuffle, with a parade of all our talent."

The assailants tried beams against the keep gate; the defenders shot them down or hurled rocks upon their heads. But on the wall of the keep Cercamorte's half-clad men fell sprawling, abristle with feathered shafts. A beam reached the gate and shook it on its hinges. Lapo, one ear shot away, drew his surviving soldiers back into the hall.

He ordered torches stuck into all the wall-rings, and ranged his men on the dais. Behind them, in the doorway leading to the upper chambers and the high tower, he saw his wife, wild-looking, and whiter than her robe.

"Go back, Madonna. It is only your family calling with some of their friends. I entered Grangioia Castle abruptly; now it is tit for tat."

The crone brought two helmets, which Lapo and Baldo put on. Then, drawing their long swords, they awaited the onset.

The keep gate yielded, and into the hall came rushing a wave of peaked and painted shields. But before the dais the wave paused, since in it were those who could not forego the joy of taunting Lapo Cercamorte before killing him. So suddenly, all his antagonists contemplated him in silence, as he crouched above them with his sword and shield half raised, his very armour seeming to emanate force, cunning, and peril.

"Foul monster!" a muffled voice shouted. "Now you come to your death!"

"Now we will give your carcass to the wild beasts. your brothers!"

"Let my daughter pass through," bawled old Grangioia; then, receiving no response, struck clumsily at Lapo.

With a twist of his sword Lapo disarmed the old man, calling out:

"Keep off, kinsman! I will not shed Grangioia blood unless you force me to it. Let Muti come forward. Or yonder gentleman dressed up in the white eagles of Este, which should hide their heads with their wings, so long and faithfully have I served them."

But none was ignorant of Cercamorte's prowess; so, after a moment of seething, they all came at him together.

The swordblades rose and fell so swiftly that they seemed to be arcs of light; the deafening clangour was pierced by the howls of the dying. The dais turned red—men slipped on it; Cercamorte's sword caught them; they did not rise. He seemed indeed to wield more swords than one, so terrible was his fighting. At his back stood Baldo, his helmet caved in, his mail shirt in ribbons, his abdomen slashed open. Both at once they saw that all their men were down. Hewing to right and left they broke through, gained the tower staircase, and locked the door behind them.

On the dark stairway they leaned against the wall, their helmets off, gasping for breath, while the enemy hammered the door.

"How is it with you?" puffed Lapo, putting his arm round Baldo's neck.

"They have wrecked my belly for me. I am finished."

Lapo Cercamorte hung his head and sobbed, "My old Baldo, my comrade, it is my folly that has killed you."

"No, no. It was only that I had survived too many tussles; then all at once our Lord recalled my case to his mind. But we have had some high times together, eh?"

Lapo, weeping aloud from remorse, patted Baldo's shoulder and kissed his withered cheek. Lamplight flooded the staircase; it was Foresto softly descending. The rays illuminated Madonna Gemma, who all the while had been standing close beside them.

"Lady," said Baldo, feebly, "can you spare me a bit of your veil? Before the door falls I must climb these steps, and that would be easier if I could first bind in my entrails."

They led him upstairs, Lapo on one side, Madonna Gemma on the other, and Foresto lighting the way. They came to the topmost chamber in the high tower—the last room of all.

Here Cercamorte kept his treasures—his scraps of looted finery, the weapons taken from fallen knights, the garrison's surplus of arms. When he had locked the door and with Foresto's slow help braced some pike-shafts against it, he tried to make Baldo lie down.

The old man vowed profanely that he would die on his feet. Shambling to the casement niche, he gaped forth at the dawn. Below him a frosty world was emerging from the mist. He saw the ring of the ramparts, and in the courtyard the barrack ruins smouldering. Beyond, the hillside also smoked, with shredding vapours; and at the foot of the hill he observed a strange sight—the small figure of a man in tunic and hood, feylike amid the mist, that danced and made gestures of joy. Baldo, clinging to the casement-sill on bending legs, summoned Cercamorte to look at the dancing figure.

"What is it, Lapo? A devil?"

"One of our guests, no doubt," said Cercamorte, dashing the tears from his eyes. "Hark! the door at the foot of the staircase has fallen. Now we come to our parting, old friend."

"Give me a bow and an arrow," cried Baldo, with a rattle in his throat. "Whoever that zany is, he shall not dance at our funeral. Just one more shot, my Lapo. You shall see that I still have it in me."

Cercamorte could not deny him this last whim. He found and strung a bow, and chose a Ghibelline war-arrow. Behind them, young Foresto drew in his breath with a hiss, laid his hand on his dagger, and turned the colour of clay. Old Baldo raised the bow, put all his remaining strength into the draw, and uttered a cracking shout of bliss. The mannikin no longer danced; but toward him, from the hillside, some men in steel were running. Baldo, sinking back into Cercamorte's arms, at last allowed himself to be laid down.

Through the door filtered the rising tumult of the enemy.

Lapo Cercamorte's blood-smeared visage turned business-like. Before grasping his sword, he bent to rub his palms on the grit of the pavement. While he was stooping, young Foresto unsheathed his dagger, made a catlike step, and stabbed at his master's neck. But quicker than Foresto was Madonna Gemma, who, with a deer's leap, imprisoned his arms from behind. Cercamorte discovered them thus, struggling fiercely in silence.

"Stand aside," he said to her, and, when he had struck Foresto down, "Thank you for that, Madonna. With such spirit to help me, I might have had worthy sons. Well, here they come, and this door is a flimsy thing. Get yourself into the casement niche, away from the swing of my blade."

A red trickle was running down his legs; he was standing in a red pool.

It began again, the splitting of panels, the cracking of hinges. The door was giving; now only the pike-shafts held it. Then came a pause. From far down the staircase a murmur of amazement swept upward; a babble of talk ensued. Silence fell. Cercamorte let out a harsh laugh.

"What new device is this? Does it need so much chicanery to finish one man?"

Time passed, and there was no sound except a long clattering from the courtyard. Of a sudden a new voice called through the broken door:

"Open, Cercamorte. I am one man alone."

"Come in without ceremony. Here am I, waiting to embrace you."

"I am Ercole Azzanera, the Marquis Azzo's cousin, and your true friend. I swear on my honour that I stand here alone with sheathed sword."

Lapo kicked the pike-shafts away, and, as the door fell inward, jumped back on guard. At the threshold, unhelmeted, stood the knight whose long surcoat was covered with the white eagles of Este. He spoke as follows:

"Cercamorte, this array came up against you because it was published that you had killed and flayed Raffaele Muti, and, out of jealous malignancy, were wearing his skin as a vest. But just now a marvellous thing has happened, for at the foot of the hill Raffaele Muti has been found, freshly slain by a wandered arrow. Save for that wound his skin is without flaw. Moreover, he lived and breathed but a moment ago. So the whole tale was false, and this war against you outrageous. All the gentlemen who came here have gone away in great amazement and shame, leaving me to ask pardon for what they have done. Forgive them, Cercamorte, in the name of Christ, for they believed themselves to be performing a proper deed."

And when Lapo found no reply in his head, Ercole Azzanera,

with a humble bow, descended from the high tower and followed the others away.

Lapo Cercamorte sat down on a stool. "All my good men," he murmured, "and my dear gossip, Baldo! My castle rushed by so shabby a ruse; my name a laughing-stock! And the Marquis Azzo gave them my house as one gives a child a leaden gimcrack to stamp on. All because of this damned vest, this silly talisman which was to gain me her love. 'In the name of Christ,' says my friend, Ercole Azzanera. By the Same! If I live I will go away to the heathen, for there is no more pleasure in Christendom."

So he sat for a while, maundering dismally, then stood up and made for the door. He reeled. He sank down with a clash. Madonna Gemma, stealing out from the casement niche, knelt beside him, peered into his face, and ran like the wind down the staircase. In the hall, with lifted robe she sped over the corpses of Cercamorte's soldiers, seeking wine and water. These obtained, she flew back to Lapo. There the crone found her. Between them those two dragged him down to Madonna Gemma's chamber, stripped him, tended his wounds, and hoisted him into the bed.

Flat on his back, Cercamorte fought over all his battles. He quarrelled with Baldo. Again he pondered anxiously outside of Madonna Gemma's door. He instructed the Arabian to fashion him a charm that would overspread his ugly face with comeliness, change his uncouthness into geniality. He insisted on wearing the vest, the under side of which was scribbled with magical signs.

Madonna Gemma sat by the bed all day, and lay beside him at night. On rising, she attired herself in a vermilion gown over which she drew a white jacket of Eastern silk embroidered with nightingales. Into her golden tresses she braided the necklaces that he had offered her. Her tapering milky fingers sparkled with rings. Her former beauty had not returned—another, greater beauty had taken its place.

A day came when he recognized her face. Leaning down like a flower of paradise, she kissed his lips.

VOLUME I
BOOK THREE

THE HEART OF LITTLE SHIKARA

By EDISON MARSHALL

From *Everybody's*

IF IT hadn't been for a purple moon that came peering up above the dark jungle just at nightfall, it would have been impossible to tell that Little Shikara was at his watch. He was really just the colour of the shadows—a rather pleasant brown—he was very little indeed, and besides, he was standing very, very still. If he was trembling at all, from anticipation and excitement, it was no more than Nahar the tiger trembles as he crouches in ambush. But the moon did show him—peering down through the leaf-clusters of the heavy vines—and shone very softly in his wide-open dark eyes.

And it was a purple moon—no other colour that man could name. It looked almost unreal, like a paper moon painted very badly by a clumsy stage-hand. The jungle-moon quite often has that peculiar purplish tint, most travellers know, but few of them indeed ever try to tell what causes it. This particular moon probed down here and there between the tall bamboos, transformed the jungle—just now waking—into a mystery and a fairyland, glinted on a hard-packed elephant trail that wound away into the thickets, and always came back to shine on the coal-black Oriental eyes of the little boy beside the village gate. It showed him standing very straight and just as tall as his small stature would permit, and looked oddly silvery and strange on his long, dark hair. Little Shikara, son of Khoda Dunnoo, was waiting for the return of a certain idol and demigod who was even now riding home in his *howdah* from the tiger hunt.

Other of the villagers would be down to meet Warwick

Sahib as soon as they heard the shouts of his beaters—but Little Shikara had been waiting almost an hour. Likely, if they had known about it, they would have commented on his badness, because he was notoriously bad, if indeed—as the villagers told each other—he was not actually cursed with evil spirits.

In the first place, he was almost valueless as a herder of buffalo. Three times, when he had been sent with the other boys to watch the herds in their wallows, he had left his post and crept away into the fringe of jungle on what was unquestionably some mission of witchcraft. For small naked brown boys, as a rule, do not go alone and unarmed into the thick bamboos. Too many things can happen to prevent them ever coming out again; too many brown silent ribbons crawl in the grass, or too many yellow, striped creatures, no less lithe, lurk in the thickets. But the strangest thing of all—and the surest sign of witchcraft—was that he had always come safely out again, yet with never any satisfactory explanations as to why he had gone. He had always looked some way very joyful and tremulous—and perhaps even pale if from the nature of things a brown boy ever can look pale. But it was the kind of paleness that one has after a particularly exquisite experience. It was not the dumb, teeth-chattering paleness of fear.

"I saw the sergeant of the jungle," Little Shikara said after one of these excursions. And this made no sense at all.

"There are none of the King's soldiers here," the brown village folk replied to him. "Either thou liest to us, or thine eyes lied to thee. And didst thou also see the chevron that told his rank?"

"That was the way I knew him. It was the black bear, and he wore the pale chevron low on his throat."

This was Little Shikara all over. Of course he referred to the black Himalayan bear which all men know wears a yellowish patch, of chevron shape, just in front of his fore legs; but why he should call him a jungle-sergeant was quite beyond the wit of the village folk to say. Their imagination did not run in that direction. It never even occurred to them that Little Shikara might be a born jungle creature, expatriated by the accident of birth—one of that free, strange breed that can never find peace in the villages of men.

"But remember the name we gave him," his mother would say. "Perhaps he is only living up to his name."

For there are certain native hunters in India that are known, far and wide, as the Shikaris; and possibly she meant in her tolerance that her little son was merely a born huntsman. But in reality Little Shikara was not named for these men at all. Rather it was for a certain fleet-winged little hawk, a hunter of sparrows, that is one of the most free spirits in all the jungle.

And it was almost like taking part in some great hunt himself—to be waiting at the gate for the return of Warwick Sahib. Even now, the elephant came striding out of the shadows; and Little Shikara could see the trophy. The hunt had indeed been successful, and the boy's glowing eyes beheld—even in the shadows—the largest, most beautiful tiger-skin he had ever seen. It was the great Nahar, the royal tiger, who had killed one hundred cattle from near-by fields.

Warwick Sahib rode in his *howdah*, and he did not seem to see the village people that came out to meet him. In truth, he seemed half asleep, his muscles limp, his gray eyes full of thoughts. He made no answer to the triumphant shouts of the village folk. Little Shikara glanced once at the lean, bronzed face, the limp, white, thin hands, and something like a shiver of ecstasy went clear to his ten toes. For like many other small boys, all over the broad world, he was a hero-worshipper to the last hair of his head; and this quiet man on the elephant was to him beyond all measure the most wonderful living creature on the earth.

He didn't cry out, as the others did. He simply stood in mute worship, his little body tingling with glory. Warwick Sahib had looked up now, and his slow eyes were sweeping the line of brown faces. But still he did not seem to see them. And then—wonder of wonders—his eyes rested full on the eyes of his little worshipper beside the gate.

But it was quite the way of Warwick Sahib to sweep his gray, tired-out eyes over a scene and seemingly perceive nothing; yet in reality absorbing every detail with the accuracy of a photographic plate. And his seeming indifference was not a pose with him, either. He was just a great sportsman who was also an English gentleman, and he had learned certain lessons of impassiveness from the wild. Only one of

the brown faces he beheld was worth a lingering glance. And when he met that one his eyes halted in their sweeping survey—and Warwick Sahib smiled.

That face was the brown, eager visage of Little Shikara. And the blood of the boy flowed to the skin, and he glowed red all over through the brown.

It was only the faintest of quiet, tolerant smiles; but it meant more to him than almost any kind of an honour could have meant to the prematurely gray man in the *howdah*. The latter passed on to his estate, and some of the villagers went back to their women and their thatch huts. But still Little Shikara stood motionless—and it wasn't until the thought suddenly came to him that possibly the beaters had already gathered and were telling the story of the kill that with startling suddenness he raced back through the gates to the village.

Yes, the beaters had assembled in a circle under a tree, and most of the villagers had gathered to hear the story. He slipped in among them, and listened with both outstanding little ears. Warwick Sahib had dismounted from his elephant as usual, the beaters said, and with but one attendant had advanced up the bed of a dry creek. This was quite like Warwick Sahib, and Little Shikara felt himself tingling again. Other hunters, particularly many of the rich sahibs from across the sea, shot their tigers from the security of the *howdah*; but this wasn't Warwick's way of doing. The male tiger had risen snarling from his lair, and had been felled at the first shot.

Most of the villagers had supposed that the story would end at this point. Warwick Sahib's tiger hunts were usually just such simple and expeditious affairs. The gun would lift to his shoulder, the quiet eyes would glance along the barrel—and the tiger, whether charging or standing still—would speedily die. But to-day there had been a curious epilogue. Just as the beaters had started toward the fallen animal, and the white Heaven-born's cigarette-case was open in his hand, Nahara, Nahar's great, tawny mate, had suddenly sprung forth from the bamboo thickets.

She drove straight to the nearest of the beaters. There was no time whatever for Warwick to take aim. His rifle leaped, like a live thing, in his arms, but not one of the horri-

fied beaters had seen his eyes lower to the sights. Yet the bullet went home—they could tell by the way the tiger flashed to her breast in the grass.

Yet she was only wounded. One of the beaters, starting, had permitted a bough of a tree to whip Warwick in the face, and the blow had disturbed what little aim he had. It was almost a miracle that he had hit the great cat at all. At once the thickets had closed around her, and the beaters had been unable to drive her forth again.

The circle was silent thereafter. They seemed to be waiting for Khusru, one of the head men of the village, to give his opinion. He knew more about the wild animals than any mature native in the assembly, and his comments on the hunting stories were usually worth hearing.

"We will not be in the honoured service of the Protector of the Poor at this time a year from now," he said.

They all waited tensely. Shikara shivered. "Speak, Khusru," they urged him.

"Warwick Sahib will go again to the jungles—and Nahara will be waiting. She owes two debts. One is the killing of her mate—and ye know that these two tigers have been long and faithful mates. Do ye think she will let that debt go unpaid? She will also avenge her own wound."

"Perhaps she will die of bleeding," one of the others suggested.

"Nay, or ye would have found her this afternoon. Ye know that it is the wounded tiger that is most to be feared. One day, and he will go forth in pursuit of her again; and then ye will not see him riding back so grandly on his elephant. Perhaps she will come here, to carry away *our* children."

Again Shikara tingled—hoping that Nahara would at least come close enough to cause excitement. And that night, too happy to keep silent, he told his mother of Warwick Sahib's smile. "And some time I—I, thine own son," he said as sleepiness came upon him, "will be a killer of tigers, even as Warwick Sahib."

"Little sparrow-hawk," his mother laughed at him. "Little one of mighty words, only the great sahibs that come from afar, and Warwick Sahib himself, may hunt the tiger. So how canst thou, little worthless?"

"I will soon be grown," he persisted, "and I—I, too—will some time return with such a tiger-skin as the great Heaven-born brought this afternoon." Little Shikara was very sleepy, and he was telling his dreams much more frankly than was his wont. "And the village folk will come out to meet me with shoutings, and I will tell them of the shot—in the circle under the tree."

"And where, little hawk, wilt thou procure thine elephants, and such rupees as are needed?"

"Warwick Sahib shoots from the ground—and so will I. And sometimes he goes forth with only one attendant—and I will not need even one. And who can say—perhaps he will find me even a bolder man than Gunga Singhai; and he will take me in his place on the hunts in the jungles."

For Gunga Singhai was Warwick Sahib's own personal attendant and gun-carrier—the native that the Protector of the Poor could trust in the tightest places. So it was only to be expected that Little Shikara's mother should laugh at him. The idea of her son being an attendant of Warwick Sahib, not to mention a hunter of tigers, was only a tale to tell her husband when the boy's bright eyes were closed in sleep.

"Nay, little man," she told him. "Would I want thee torn to pieces in Nahara's claws? Would I want thee smelling of the jungle again, as thou didst after chasing the water-buck through the bamboos? Nay—thou wilt be a herdsman, like thy father—and perhaps gather many rupees."

But Little Shikara did not want to think of rupees. Even now, as sleep came to him, his childish spirit had left the circle of thatch roofs, and had gone on tremulous expeditions into the jungle. Far away, the trumpet-call of a wild tusker trembled through the moist, hot night; and great bell-shaped flowers made the air pungent and heavy with perfume. A tigress skulked somewhere in a thicket licking an injured leg with her rough tongue, pausing to listen to every sound the night gave forth. Little Shikara whispered in his sleep.

A half mile distant, in his richly furnished bungalow, Warwick Sahib dozed over his after-dinner cigar. He was in evening clothes, and crystal and silver glittered on his board. But his gray eyes were half closed; and the gleam from his plate

could not pass the long, dark lashes. For his spirit was far distant, too—on the jungle trails with that of Little Shikara.

II

ONE sunlit morning, perhaps a month after the skin of Nahar was brought in from the jungle, Warwick Sahib's mail was late. It was an unheard-of thing. Always before, just as the clock struck eight, he would hear the cheerful tinkle of the postman's bells. At first he considered complaining; but as morning drew to early afternoon he began to believe that investigation would be the wiser course.

The postman's route carried him along an old elephant trail through a patch of thick jungle beside one of the tributaries of the Manipur. When natives went out to look, he was neither on the path nor drowned in the creek, nor yet in his thatched hut at the other end of his route. The truth was that this particular postman's bells would never be heard by human ears again. And there was enough evidence in the wet mould of the trail to know what had occurred.

That night the circle under the tree was silent and shivering. "Who is next?" they asked of one another. The jungle night came down, breathless and mysterious, and now and then a twig was cracked by a heavy foot at the edge of the thickets. In Warwick's house, the great Protector of the Poor took his rifles from their cases and fitted them together.

"To-morrow," he told Gunga Singhai, "we will settle for that postman's death." Singhai breathed deeply, but said nothing. Perhaps his dark eyes brightened. The tiger-hunts were nearly as great a delight to him as they were to Warwick himself.

But while Nahara, lame from Warwick's bullet, could no longer overtake cattle, she did with great skilfulness avoid the onrush of the beaters. Again Little Shikara waited at the village gate for his hero to return; but the beaters walked silently to-night. Nor were there any tales to be told under the tree.

Nahara, a fairly respectable cattle-killer before, had become in a single night one of the worst terrors of India. Of course she was still a coward, but she had learned, by virtue

of a chance meeting with a postman on a trail after a week of heart-devouring starvation, two or three extremely portentous lessons. One of them was that not even the little deer, drinking beside the Manipur, died half so easily as these tall, forked forms of which she had previously been so afraid. She found out also that they could neither run swiftly nor walk silently, and they could be approached easily even by a tiger that cracked a twig with every step. It simplified the problem of living immensely; and just as any other feline would have done, she took the line of least resistance. If there had been plenty of carrion in the jungle, Nahara might never have hunted men. But the kites and the jackals looked after the carrion; and they were much swifter and keener-eyed than a lame tiger.

She knew enough not to confine herself to one village; and it is rather hard to explain how any lower creature, that obviously cannot reason, could have possessed this knowledge. Perhaps it was because she had learned that a determined hunt, with many beaters and men on elephants, invariably followed her killings. It was always well to travel just as far as possible from the scene. She found out also that, just as a doe is easier felled than a horned buck, certain of this new kind of game were more easily taken than the others. Sometimes children played at the door of their huts, and sometimes old men were afflicted with such maladies that they could not flee at all. All these things Nahara learned; and in learning them she caused a certain civil office of the British Empire to put an exceedingly large price on her head.

Gradually the fact dawned on her that unlike the deer and the buffalo, this new game was more easily hunted in the daylight—particularly in that tired-out, careless twilight hour when the herders and the plantation hands came in from their work. At night the village folk kept in their huts, and such wood-cutters and gypsies as slept without wakened every hour to tend their fires. Nahara was deathly afraid of fire. Night after night she would creep round and round a gypsy camp, her eyes like two pale blue moons in the darkness, and would never dare attack.

And because she was taking her living in a manner forbidden by the laws of the jungle, the glory and beauty of her youth quickly departed from her. There are no prisons for

those that break the jungle laws, no courts and no appointed officers; but because these are laws that go down to the roots of life, punishment is always swift and inevitable. "Thou shalt not kill men," is the first law of the wild creatures; and everyone knows that any animal or breed of animals that breaks this law has sooner or later been hunted down and slain—just like any other murderer. The mange came upon her, and she lost flesh, and certain of her teeth began to come out. She was no longer the beautiful female of her species, to be sung to by the weaver-birds as she passed beneath. She was a hag and a vampire, hatred of whom lay deep in every human heart in her hunting range.

Often the hunting was poor, and sometimes she went many days in a stretch without making a single kill. And in all beasts, high and low, this is the last step to the worst degeneracy of all. It instils a curious, terrible kind of blood-lust—to kill, not once, but as many times as possible in the same hunt; to be content not with one death, but to slay and slay until the whole herd is destroyed. It is the instinct that makes a little weasel kill all the chickens in a coop, when one was all it could possibly carry away, and that will cause a wolf to leap from sheep to sheep in a fold until every one is dead. Nahara didn't get a chance to kill every day; so when the opportunity did come, like a certain pitiable kind of human hunter who comes from afar to hunt small game, she killed as many times as she could in quick succession. And the British Empire raised the price on her head.

One afternoon found her within a half mile of Warwick's bungalow, and for five days she had gone without food. One would not have thought of her as a royal tigress, the queen of the felines and one of the most beautiful of all living things. And since she was still tawny and graceful, it would be hard to understand why she no longer gave the impression of beauty. It was simply gone, as a flame goes, and her queenliness was wholly departed, too. In some vague way she had become a poisonous, a ghastly thing, to be named with such outcasts as the jackals or hyenas.

Excessive hunger, in most of the flesh-eating animals, is really a first cousin to madness. It brings bad dreams and visions, and, worst of all, it induces an insubordination to all the forest laws of man and beast. A well-fed wolf-pack will

run in stark panic from a human being; but even the wisest of mountaineers do not care to meet the same gray band in the starving times of winter. Starvation brings recklessness, a desperate frenzied courage that is likely to upset all of one's preconceived notions as to the behaviour of animals. It also brings, so that all men may be aware of its presence, a peculiar lurid glow to the balls of the eyes.

In fact, the two pale circles of fire were the most noticeable characteristics of the long, tawny cat that crept through the bamboos. Except for them, she would hardly have been discernible at all. The yellow grass made a perfect background, her black stripes looked like the streaks of shadow between the stalks of bamboo, and for one that is lame she crept with an astounding silence. One couldn't have believed that such a great creature could lie so close to the earth and be so utterly invisible in the low thickets.

A little peninsula of dwarf bamboos and tall jungle grass extended out into the pasture before the village and Nahara crept out clear to its point. She didn't seem to be moving. One couldn't catch the stir and draw of muscles. And yet she slowly glided to the end; then began her wait. Her head sunk low, her body grew tense, her tail whipped softly back and forth, with as easy a motion as the swaying of a serpent. The light flamed and died and flamed and died again in her pale eyes.

Soon a villager who had been working in Warwick's fields came trotting in Oriental fashion across the meadow. His eyes were only human, and he did not see the tawny shape in the tall grass. If any one had told him that a full-grown tigress could have crept to such a place and still remained invisible, he would have laughed. He was going to his thatched hut, to brown wife and babies, and it was no wonder that he trotted swiftly. The muscles of the great cat bunched, and now the whipping tail began to have a little vertical motion that is the final warning of a spring.

The man was already in leaping range; but the tiger had learned, in many experiences, always to make sure. Still she crouched—a single instant in which the trotting native came two paces nearer. Then the man drew up with a gasp of fright.

For just as the clear outlines of an object that has long

been concealed in a maze of light and shadow will often leap, with sudden vividness, to the eyes, the native suddenly perceived the tiger.

He caught the whole dread picture—the crouching form, the terrible blue lights of the eyes, the whipping tail. The gasp he uttered from his closing throat seemed to act like the fall of a firing-pin against a shell on the bunched muscles of the animal; and she left her covert in a streak of tawny light.

But Nahara's leaps had never been quite accurate since she had been wounded by Warwick's bullet, months before. They were usually straight enough for the general purposes of hunting, but they missed by a long way the "theoretical centre of impact" of which artillery officers speak. Her lame paw always seemed to disturb her balance. By remembering it, she could usually partly overcome the disadvantage; but to-day, in the madness of her hunger, she had been unable to remember anything except the terrible rapture of killing. This circumstance alone, however, would not have saved the native's life. Even though her fangs missed his throat, the power of the blow and her rending talons would have certainly snatched away his life as a storm snatches a leaf. But there was one other determining factor. The Burman had seen the tiger just before she leaped; and although there had been no time for conscious thought, his guardian reflexes had flung him to one side in a single frenzied effort to miss the full force of the spring.

The result of both these things was that he received only an awkward, sprawling blow from the animal's shoulder. Of course he was hurled to the ground; for no human body in the world is built to withstand the ton or so of shocking power of a three-hundred-pound cat leaping through the air. The tigress sprawled down also, and because she lighted on her wounded paw, she squealed with pain. It was possibly three seconds before she had forgotten the stabbing pain in her paw and had gathered herself to spring on the unconscious form of the native. And that three seconds gave Warwick Sahib, sitting at the window of his study, an opportunity to seize his rifle and fire.

Warwick knew tigers, and he had kept the rifle always ready for just such a need as this. The distance was nearly

five hundred yards, and the bullet went wide of its mark. Nevertheless, it saved the native's life. The great cat remembered this same far-off explosion from another day, in a dry creek-bed of months before, and the sing of the bullet was a remembered thing, too. Although it would speedily return to her, her courage fled and she turned and faced into the bamboos.

In an instant, Warwick was on his great veranda, calling his beaters. Gunga Singhai, his faithful gun-carrier, slipped shells into the magazine of his master's high-calibered close-range tiger-rifle. "The elephant, Sahib?" he asked swiftly.

"Nay, this will be on foot. Make the beaters circle about the fringe of bamboos. Thou and I will cross the eastern fields and shoot at her as she breaks through."

But there was really no time to plan a complete campaign. Even now, the first gray of twilight was blurring the sharp outlines of the jungle, and the soft jungle night was hovering, ready to descend. Warwick's plan was to cut through to a certain little creek that flowed into the river and with Singhai to continue on to the edge of the bamboos that overlooked a wide field. The beaters would prevent the tigress from turning back beyond the village, and it was at least possible that he would get a shot at her as she burst from the jungle and crossed the field to the heavier thickets beyond.

"Warwick Sahib walks into the teeth of his enemy," Khusru, the hunter, told a little group that watched from the village gate. "Nahara will collect her debts."

A little brown boy shivered at his words and wondered if the beaters would turn and kick him, as they had always done before, if he should attempt to follow them. It was the tiger-hunt, in view of his own village, and he sat down, tremulous with rapture, in the grass to watch. It was almost as if his dream—that he himself should be a hunter of tigers—was coming true. He wondered why the beaters seemed to move so slowly and with so little heart.

He would have known if he could have looked into their eyes. Each black pupil was framed with white. Human hearts grow shaken and bloodless from such sights as this they had just seen, and only the heart of a jungle creature—the heart of the eagle that the jungle gods, by some unheard-of fortune, had put in the breast of Little Shikara

—could prevail against them. Besides, the superstitious Burmans thought that Warwick was walking straight to death—that the time had come for Nahara to collect her debts.

III

WARWICK SAHIB and Singhai disappeared at once into the fringe of jungle, and silence immediately fell upon them. The cries of the beaters at once seemed curiously dim. It was as if no sound could live in the great silences under the arching trees. Soon it was as if they were alone.

They walked side by side, Warwick with his rifle held ready. He had no false ideas in regard to this tiger-hunt. He knew that his prey was desperate with hunger, that she had many old debts to pay, and that she would charge on sight.

The self-rage that is felt on missing some particularly fortunate chance is not confined to human beings alone. There is an old saying in the forest that a feline that has missed his stroke is like a jackal in dog-days—and that means that it is not safe to be anywhere in the region with him. He simply goes rabid and is quite likely to leap at the first living thing that stirs. Warwick knew that Nahara had just been cheated out of her kill and someone in the jungle would pay for it.

The gaudy birds that looked down from the tree-branches could scarcely recognize this prematurely gray man as a hunter. He walked rather quietly, yet with no conscious effort toward stealth. The rifle rested easily in his arms, his gray eyes were quiet and thoughtful as always. Singularly, his splendid features were quite in repose. The Burman, however, had more of the outer signs of alertness; and yet there was none of the blind terror upon him that marked the beaters.

"Where are the men?" Warwick asked quietly. "It is strange that we do not hear them shouting."

"They are afraid, Sahib," Singhai replied. "The forest pigs have left us to do our own hunting."

Warwick corrected him with a smile. "Forest pigs are brave enough," he answered. "They are sheep—just sheep—sheep of the plains."

The broad trail divided, like a three-tined candlestick, into

narrow trails. Warwick halted beside the centre of the three that led to the creek they were obliged to cross. Just for an instant he stood watching, gazing into the deep-blue dusk of the deeper jungle. Twilight was falling softly. The trails soon vanished into shadow—patches of deep gloom, relieved here and there by a bright leaf that reflected the last twilight rays. A living creature coughed and rustled away in the thickets beside him.

"There is little use of going on," he said. "It is growing too dark. But there will be killings before the dawn if we don't get her first."

The servant stood still, waiting. It was not his place to advise his master.

"If we leave her, she'll come again before the dawn. Many of the herders haven't returned—she'll get one of them sure. At least we may cross the creek and get a view of the great fields. She is certain to cross them if she has heard the beaters."

In utter silence they went on. One hundred yards farther they came to the creek, and both strode in together to ford.

The water was only knee-deep, but Warwick's boots sank three inches in the mud of the bottom. And at that instant the gods of the jungle, always waiting with drawn scimitar for the unsuspecting, turned against them.

Singhai suddenly splashed down into the water, on his hands and knees. He did not cry out. If he made any sound at all, it was just a shivering gasp that the splash of water wholly obscured. But the thing that brought home the truth to Warwick was the pain that flashed, vivid as lightning, across his dark face; and the horror of death that left its shadow. Something churned and writhed in the mud; and then Warwick fired.

Both of them had forgotten Mugger, the crocodile, that so loves to wait in the mud of a ford. He had seized Singhai's foot, and had already snatched him down into the water when Warwick fired. No living flesh can withstand the terrible, rending shock of a high-powered sporting rifle at close range. Mugger had plates of armour, but even these could not have availed against it if he had been exposed to the fire. As it was, several inches of water stood between, a more

effective armour than a two-inch steel plate on a battleship. Of course the shock carried through, a smashing blow that caused the reptile to release his hold on Singhai's leg; but before the native could get to his feet he had struck again. The next instant both men were fighting for their lives.

They fought with their hands, and Warwick fought with his rifle, and the native slashed again and again with the long knife that he carried at his belt. To a casual glance, a crocodile is wholly incapable of quick action. These two found him a slashing, darting, wolf-like thing, lunging with astounding speed through the muddied water, knocking them from their feet and striking at them as they fell.

The reptile was only half grown, but in the water they had none of the usual advantages that man has over the beasts with which he does battle. Warwick could not find a target for his rifle. But even human bodies, usually so weak, find themselves possessed of an amazing reserve strength and agility in the moment of need. These men realized perfectly that their lives were the stakes for which they fought, and they gave every ounce of strength and energy they had. Their aim was to hold the mugger off until they could reach the shore.

At last, by a lucky stroke, Singhai's knife blinded one of the lurid reptile eyes. He was prone in the water when he administered it, and it went home just as the savage teeth were snapping at his throat. For an instant the great reptile flopped in an impotent half-circle, partly reared out of the water. It gave Warwick a chance to shoot, a single instant in which the rifle seemed to whirl about in his arms, drive to his shoulder, and blaze in the deepening twilight. And the shot went true. It pierced the mugger from beneath, tearing upward through the brain. And then the agitated waters of the ford slowly grew quiet.

The last echo of the report was dying when Singhai stretched his bleeding arms about Warwick's body, caught up the rifle and dragged them forty feet up on the shore. It was an effort that cost the last of his strength. And as the stars popped out of the sky, one by one, through the gray of dusk, the two men lay silent, side by side, on the grassy bank.

Warwick was the first to regain consciousness. At first

he didn't understand the lashing pain in his wrists, the strange numbness in one of his legs, the darkness with the great white Indian stars shining through. Then he remembered. And he tried to stretch his arm to the prone form beside him.

The attempt was an absolute failure. The cool brain dispatched the message, it flew along the telegraph-wires of the nerves, but the muscles refused to react. He remembered that the teeth of the mugger had met in one of the muscles of his upper arm, but before unconsciousness had come upon him he had been able to lift the gun to shoot. Possibly infection from the bite had in some manner temporarily paralyzed the arm. He turned, wracked with pain, on his side and lifted his left arm. In doing so his hand crossed before his eyes—and then he smiled wanly in the darkness.

It was quite like Warwick, sportsman and English gentleman, to smile at a time like this. Even in the gray darkness of the jungle night he could see the hand quite plainly. It no longer looked slim and white. And he remembered that the mugger had caught his fingers in one of its last rushes.

He paused only for one glance at the mutilated member. He knew that his first work was to see how Singhai had fared. In that glance he was boundlessly relieved to see that the hand could unquestionably be saved. The fingers were torn, yet their bones did not seem to be severed. Temporarily at least, however, the hand was utterly useless. The fingers felt strange and detached.

He reached out to the still form beside him, touching the dark skin first with his fingers, and then, because they had ceased to function, with the flesh of his wrist. He expected to find it cold. Singhai was alive, however, and his warm blood beat close to the dark skin.

But he was deeply unconscious, and it was possible that one foot was hopelessly mutilated.

For a moment Warwick lay quite still, looking his situation squarely in the face. He did not believe that either he or his attendant was mortally or even very seriously hurt. True, one of his arms had suffered paralysis, but there was no reason for thinking it had been permanently injured. His hand would be badly scarred, but soon as good as ever. The real question that faced them was that of getting back to the bungalow.

Walking was out of the question. His whole body was bruised and lacerated, and he was already dangerously weak from loss of blood. It would take all his energy, these first few hours, to keep his consciousness. Besides, it was perfectly obvious that Singhai could not walk. And English gentlemen do not desert their servants at a time like this. The real mystery lay in the fact that the beaters had not already found and rescued them.

He wore a watch with luminous dial on his left wrist, and he managed to get it before his eyes. And then understanding came to him. A full hour had passed since he and his servant had fought the mugger in the ford. And the utter silence of early night had come down over the jungle.

There was only one thing to believe. The beaters had evidently heard him shoot, sought in vain for him in the thickets, possibly passed within a few hundred feet of him, and because he had been unconscious he had not heard them or called to them, and now they had given him up for lost. He remembered with bitterness how all of them had been sure that an encounter with Nahara would cost him his life, and would thus be all the more quick to believe he had died in her talons. Nahara had her mate and her own lameness to avenge, they had said, attributing in their superstition human emotions to the brute natures of animals. It would have been quite useless for Warwick to attempt to tell them that the male tiger, in the mind of her wicked mate, was no longer even a memory, and that premeditated vengeance is an emotion almost unknown in the animal world. Without leaders or encouragement, and terribly frightened by the scene they had beheld before the village, they had quickly given up any attempt to find his body. There had been none among them coolheaded enough to reason out which trail he had likely taken, and thus look for him by the ford. Likely they were already huddled in their thatched huts, waiting till daylight.

Then he called in the darkness. A heavy body brushed through the creepers, and stepping falsely, broke a twig. He thought at first that it might be one of the villagers, coming to look for him. But at once the step was silenced.

Warwick had a disturbing thought that the creature that had broken the twig had not gone away, but was crouching

down, in a curious manner, in the deep shadows. Nahara had returned to her hunting.

IV

"SOME time I, too, will be a hunter of tigers," Little Shikara told his mother when the beaters began to circle through the bamboos. "To carry a gun beside Warwick Sahib—and to be honoured in the circle under the tree!"

But his mother hardly listened. She was quivering with fright. She had seen the last part of the drama in front of the village; and she was too frightened even to notice the curious imperturbability of her little son. But there was no orderly retreat after Little Shikara had heard the two reports of the rifle. At first there were only the shouts of the beaters, singularly high-pitched, much running back and forth in the shadows, and then a pell-mell scurry to the shelter of the villages.

For a few minutes there was wild excitement at the village gates. Warwick Sahib was dead, they said—they had heard the shots and run to the place of firing, and beat up and down through the bamboos; and Warwick Sahib had surely been killed and carried off by the tigress. This dreadful story told, most of the villagers went to hide at once in their huts; only a little circle of the bravest men hovered at the gate. They watched with drawn faces the growing darkness.

But there was one among them who was not yet a man grown; a boy so small that he could hover, unnoticed, in the very smallest of the terrible shadow-patches. He was Little Shikara, and he was shocked to the very depths of his worshipping heart. For Warwick had been his hero, the greatest man of all time, and he felt himself burning with indignation that the beaters should return so soon. And it was a curious fact that he had not as yet been infected with the contagion of terror that was being passed from man to man among the villagers. Perhaps his indignation was too absorbing an emotion to leave room for terror, and perhaps, far down in his childish spirit, he was made of different stuff. He was a child of the jungle, and perhaps he had shared of that great imperturbability and impassiveness that is the eternal trait of the wildernesses.

He went up to one of the younger beaters who had told and retold a story of catching a glimpse of Nahara in the thickets until no one was left to tell it to. He was standing silent, and Little Shikara thought it possible that he might reach his ears.

"Give ear, Puran," he pleaded. "Didst thou look for his body beside the ford over Tarai stream?"

"Nay, little one—though I passed within one hundred paces."

"Dost thou not know that he and Singhai would of a certainty cross at the ford to reach the fringe of jungle from which he might watch the eastern field? Some of you looked on the trail beside the ford, but none looked at the ford itself. And the sound of the rifle seemed to come from thence."

"But why did he not call out?"

"Dead men could not call, but at least ye might have frightened Nahara from the body. But perhaps he is wounded, unable to speak, and lies there still——"

But Puran had found another listener for his story, and speedily forgot the boy. He hurried over to another of the villagers, Khusru the hunter.

"Did no one look by the ford?" he asked, almost sobbing. "For that is the place he had gone."

The native's eyes seemed to light. "*Hai*, little one, thou hast thought of what thy elders had forgotten. There is level land there, and clear. And I shall go at the first ray of dawn——"

"But not to-night, Khusru——?"

"Nay, little sinner! Wouldst thou have me torn to pieces?"

Lastly Little Shikara went to his own father, and they had a moment's talk at the outskirts of the throng. But the answer was nay—just the same. Even his brave father would not go to look for the body until daylight came. The boy felt his skin prickling all over.

"But perhaps he is only wounded—and left to die. If I go and return with word that he is there, wilt thou take others and go out and bring him in?"

"*Thou* goest!" His father broke forth in a great roar of laughter. "Why, thou little hawk! One would think that thou wert a hunter of tigers thyself!"

Little Shikara blushed beneath the laughter. For he was a very boyish little boy in most ways. But it seemed to him that his sturdy young heart was about to break open from bitterness. All of them agreed that Warwick Sahib, perhaps wounded and dying, might be lying by the ford, but none of them would venture forth to see. Unknowing, he was beholding the expression of a certain age-old trait of human nature. Men do not fight ably in the dark. They need their eyes, and they particularly require a definite object to give them determination. If these villagers knew for certain that the Protector of the Poor lay wounded or even dead beside the ford, they would have rallied bravely, encouraged one another with words and oaths, and gone forth to rescue him; but they wholly lacked the courage to venture again into the jungle on any such blind quest as Little Shikara suggested.

But the boy's father should not have laughed. He should have remembered the few past occasions when his straight little son had gone into the jungle alone; and that remembrance should have silenced him. The difficulty lay in the fact that he supposed his boy and he were of the same flesh, and that Little Shikara shared his own great dread of the night-curtained jungle. In this he was very badly mistaken. Little Shikara had an inborn understanding and love of the jungle; and except for such material dangers as that of Nahara, he was not afraid of it at all. He had no superstitions in regard to it. Perhaps he was too young. But the main thing that the laugh did was to set off, as a match sets off powder, a whole heartful of unexploded indignation in Shikara's breast. These villagers not only had deserted their patron and protector, but also they had laughed at the thought of rescue! His own father had laughed at him.

Little Shikara silently left the circle of villagers and turned into the darkness.

At once the jungle silence closed round him. He hadn't dreamed that the noise of the villagers would die so quickly. Although he could still see the flame of the fire at the village gate behind him, it was almost as if he had at once dropped off into another world. Great flowers poured fume down upon him, and at seemingly a great distance he heard the faint murmur of the wind.

At first, deep down in his heart, he had really not intended to go all the way. He had expected to steal clear to the outer edge of the firelight; and then stand listening to the darkness for such impressions as the jungle would choose to give him. But there had been no threshold, no interlude of preparation. The jungle in all its mystery had folded about him at once.

He trotted softly down the elephant trail, a dim, fleet shadow that even the keen eyes of Nahara could scarcely have seen. At first he was too happy to be afraid. He was always happy when the jungle closed round him. Besides, if Nahara had killed, she would be full-fed by now and not to be feared. Little Shikara hastened on, trembling all over with a joyous sort of excitement.

If a single bird had flapped its wings in the branches, if one little rodent had stirred in the underbrush, Little Shikara would likely have turned back. But the jungle-gods, knowing their son, stilled all the forest voices. He crept on, still looking now and again over his shoulder to see the village fire. It still made a bright yellow triangle in the dusk behind him. He didn't stop to think that he was doing a thing most grown natives and many white men would not have dared to do—to follow a jungle trail unarmed at night. If he had stopped to think at all he simply would have been unable to go on. He was only following his instincts, voices that such forces as maturity and grown-up intelligence and self-consciousness obscure in older men—and the terror of the jungle could not touch him. He went straight to do what service he could for the white sahib that was one of his lesser gods.

Time after time he halted, but always he pushed on a few more feet. Now he was over halfway to the ford, clear to the forks in the trail. And then he turned about with a little gasp of fear.

The light from the village had gone out. The thick foliage of the jungle had come between.

He was really frightened now. It wasn't that he was afraid he couldn't get back. The trail was broad and hard and quite gray in the moonlight. But those far-off beams of light had been a solace to his spirit, a reminder that he had not yet broken all ties with the village. He halted, intending to turn back.

Then a thrill began at his scalp and went clear to his bare toes. Faint through the jungle silences he heard Warwick Sahib calling to his faithless beaters. The voice had an unmistakable quality of distress.

Certain of the villagers—a very few of them—said afterward that Little Shikara continued on because he was afraid to go back. They said that he looked upon the Heaven-born sahib as a source of all power, in whose protection no harm could befall him, and he sped toward him because the distance was shorter than back to the haven of fire at the village. But those who could look deeper into Little Shikara's soul knew different. In some degree at least he hastened on down that jungle trail of peril because he knew that his idol was in distress, and by laws that went deep he knew he must go to his aid.

V

THE first few minutes after Warwick had heard a living step in the thickets he spent in trying to reload his rifle. He carried other cartridges in the right-hand trousers pocket, but after a few minutes of futile effort it became perfectly evident that he was not able to reach them. His right arm was useless, and the fingers of his left, lacerated by the mugger's bite, refused to take hold.

He had, however, three of the five shells the rifle held still in his gun. The single question that remained was whether or not they would be of use to him.

The rifle lay half under him, its stock protruding from beneath his body. With the elbow of his left arm he was able to work it out. Considering the difficulties under which he worked, he made amazingly few false motions; and yet he worked with swiftness. Warwick was a man who had been schooled and trained by many dangers; he had learned to face them with open eyes and steady hands, to judge with unclouded thought the exact percentage of his chances. He knew now that he must work swiftly. The shape in the shadow was not going to wait all night.

But at that moment the hope of preserving his life that he had clung to until now broke like a bubble in the sunlight. He could not lift the gun to swing and aim it at a shape in

the darkness. With his mutilated hands he could not cock the strong-sprung hammer. And if he could do both these things with his fumbling, bleeding, lacerated fingers, his right hand could not be made to pull the trigger. Warwick Sahib knew at last just where he stood. Yet if human sight could have penetrated that dusk, it would have beheld no change of expression in the lean face.

An English gentleman lay at the frontier of death. But that occasioned neither fawning nor a loss of his rigid self-control.

Two things remained, however, that he might do. One was to call and continue to call, as long as life lasted in his body. He knew perfectly that more than once in the history of India a tiger had been kept at a distance, at least for a short period of time, by shouts alone. In that interlude, perhaps help might come from the village. The second thing was almost as impossible as raising and firing the rifle; but by the luck of the gods he might achieve it. He wanted to find Singhai's knife and hold it compressed in his palm.

It wasn't that he had any vain hopes of repelling the tiger's attack with a single knife-blade that would be practically impossible for his mutilated hand to hold. Nahara had five or so knife-blades in every paw and a whole set of them in her mouth. She could stand on four legs and fight, and Warwick could not lift himself on one elbow and yet wield the blade. But there were other things to be done with blades, even held loosely in the palm, at a time like this.

He knew rather too much of the way of tigers. They do not always kill swiftly. It is the tiger way to tease, long moments, with half-bared talons; to let the prey crawl away a few feet for the rapture of leaping at it again; to fondle with an exquisite cruelty for moments that seem endless to its prey. A knife, on the other hand, kills quickly. Warwick much preferred the latter death.

And even as he called, again and again, he began to feel about in the grass with his lacerated hand for the hilt of the knife. Nahara was steadily stealing toward him through the shadows.

The great tigress was at the height of her hunting madness. The earlier adventure of the evening when she had missed her stroke, the stir and tumult of the beaters in the wood,

her many days of hunger, had all combined to intensify her passion. And finally there had come the knowledge, in subtle ways, that two of her own kind of game were lying wounded and helpless beside the ford.

But even the royal tiger never forgets some small measure of its caution. She did not charge at once. The game looked so easy that it was in some way suggestive of a trap. She crept forward, a few feet at a time. The wild blood began to leap through the great veins. The hair went stiff on the neck muscles.

But Warwick shouted; and the sound for an instant appalled her. She lurked in the shadows. And then, as she made a false step, Warwick heard her for the first time.

Again she crept forward, to pause when Warwick raised his voice the second time. The man knew enough to call at intervals rather than continuously. A long, continued outcry would very likely stretch the tiger's nerves to a breaking point and hurl her into a frenzy that would probably result in a death-dealing charge. Every few seconds he called again. In the intervals between the tiger crept forward. Her excitement grew upon her. She crouched lower. Her sinewy tail had whipped softly at first; now it was lashing almost to her sides. And finally it began to have a slight vertical movement that Warwick, fortunately for his spirit, could not see.

Then the little light that the moon poured down was suddenly reflected in Nahara's eyes. All at once they burned out of the dusk; two blue-green circles of fire fifty feet distant in the darkness. At that Warwick gasped—for the first time. In another moment the great cat would be in range—and he had not yet found the knife. Nothing remained to believe but that it was lost in the mud of the ford, fifty feet distant, and that the last dread avenue of escape was cut off.

But at that instant the gasp gave way to a whispered oath of wonder. Some living creature was running lightly down the trail toward him—soft, light feet that came with amazing swiftness. For once in his life Warwick did not know where he stood. For once he was the chief figure of a situation he did not entirely understand. He tried to probe into the darkness with his tired eyes.

"Here I am!" he called. The tiger, starting to creep for-

ward once more, halted at the voice. A small straight figure sped like an arrow out of the thickets and halted at his side.

It was such an astounding appearance as for an instant completely paralyzes the mental faculties. Warwick's first emotion was simply a great and hopeless astonishment. Long inured to the mystery of the jungle, he thought he had passed the point where any earthly happening could actually bewilder him. But in spite of it, in spite of the fire-eyed peril in the darkness, he was quite himself when he spoke. The voice that came out of the silence was wholly steady—a kindly, almost amused voice of one who knows life as it is and who has mastered his own destiny.

"Who in the world?" he asked in the vernacular.

"It is I—Little Shikara," a tremulous voice answered. Except for the tremor he could not keep from his tone, he spoke as one man to another.

Warwick knew at once that Little Shikara was not yet aware of the presence of the tiger fifty feet distant in the shadows. But he knew nothing else. The whole situation was beyond his ken.

But his instincts were manly and true. "Then run speedily, little one," he whispered, "back to the village. There is danger here in the dark."

Little Shikara tried to speak, and he swallowed painfully. A lump had come in his throat that at first would not let him talk. "Nay, Protector of the Poor!" he answered. "I—I came alone. And I—I am thy servant."

Warwick's heart bounded. Not since his youth had left him to a gray world had his strong heart leaped in just this way before. "Merciful God!" he whispered in English. "Has a child come to save me?" Then he whipped again into the vernacular and spoke swiftly; for no further seconds were to be wasted. "Little Shikara, have you ever fired a gun?"

"No, Sahib——"

"Then lift it up and rest it across my body. Thou knowest how it is held——"

Little Shikara didn't know exactly, but he rested the gun on Warwick's body; and he had seen enough target practice to crook his finger about the trigger. And together, the

strangest pair of huntsmen that the Indian stars ever looked down upon, they waited.

"It is Nahara," Warwick explained softly. For he had decided to be frank with Little Shikara, trusting all to the courage of a child. "It all depends on thee. Pull back the hammer with thy thumb."

Little Shikara obeyed. He drew it back until it clicked, and did not, as Warwick had feared, let it slip through his fingers back against the breach. "Yes, Sahib," he whispered breathlessly. His little brave heart seemed about to explode in his breast. But it was the test, and he knew he must not waver in the sahib's eyes.

"It is Nahara, and thou art a man," Warwick said again. "And now thou must wait until thou seest her eyes."

So they strained into the darkness; and in an instant more they saw again the two circles of greenish, smouldering fire. They were quite near now—Nahara was almost in leaping range.

"Thou wilt look through the little hole at the rear and then along the barrel," Warwick ordered swiftly, "and thou must see the two eyes along the little notch in front."

"I see, Sahib—and between the eyes," came the same breathless whisper. The little brown body held quite still. Warwick could not even feel it trembling against his own. For the moment, by virtue of some strange prank of Shiv, the jungle-gods were giving their own strength to this little brown son of theirs beside the ford.

"Thou wilt not jerk or move?"

"Nay, Sahib." And he spoke true. The world might break to pieces or blink out, but he would not throw off his aim by any terror motions. They could see the tiger's outline now—the lithe, low-hung body, the tail that twitched up and down.

"Then pull the trigger," Warwick whispered.

The whole jungle world rocked and trembled from the violence of the report.

When the villagers, aroused by the roar of the rifle and led by Khusru and Puran and Little Shikara's father, rushed down with their firebrands to the ford, their first thought was that they had come only to the presence of the dead. Three

human beings lay very still beside the stream, and fifty feet in the shadows something else, that obviously was *not* a human being, lay very still, too. But they were not to have any such horror story to tell their wives. Only one of the three by the ford, Singhai, the gun-bearer, was even really unconscious; Little Shikara, the rifle still held lovingly in his arms, had gone into a half-faint from fear and nervous exhaustion, and Warwick Sahib had merely closed his eyes to the darting light of the firebrands. The only death that had occurred was that of Nahara the tigress—and she had a neat hole bored completely through her neck. To all evidence, she had never stirred after Little Shikara's bullet had gone home.

After much confusion and shouting and falling over one another, and gazing at Little Shikara as if he were some new kind of a ghost, the villagers got a stretcher each for Singhai and the Protector of the Poor. And when they got them well loaded into them, and Little Shikara had quite come to himself and was standing with some bewilderment in a circle of staring townspeople, a clear, commanding voice ordered that they all be silent. Warwick Sahib was going to make what was the nearest approach to a speech that he had made since various of his friends had decoyed him to a dinner in London some years before.

The words that he said, the short vernacular words that have a way of coming straight to the point, established Little Shikara as a legend through all that corner of British India. It was Little Shikara who had come alone through the jungle, said he; it was Little Shikara's shining eyes that had gazed along the barrel, and it was his own brown finger that had pulled the trigger. Thus, said Warwick, he would get the bounty that the British Government offered—British rupees that to a child's eyes would be past counting. Thus in time, with Warwick's influence, his would be a great voice through all of India. For small as he was, and not yet grown, he was of the true breed.

After the shouting was done, Warwick turned to Little Shikara to see how he thought upon all these things. "Thou shalt have training for the army, little one, where thy good nerve will be of use, and thou shalt be a native officer, along with the sons of princes. I, myself, will see to it, for

I do not hold my life so cheap that I will forget the thing that thou hast done to-night."

And he meant what he said. The villagers stood still when they saw his earnest face. "And what, little hawk, wilt thou have more?" he asked.

Little Shikara trembled and raised his eyes. "Only sometimes to ride with thee, in thy *howdah*, as thy servant, when thou again seekest the tiger."

The whole circle laughed at this. They were just human, after all. Their firebrands were held high, and gleamed on Little Shikara's dusky face, and made a lustre in his dark eyes. The circle, roaring with laughter, did not hear the sahib's reply, but they did see him nod his head.

"I would not dare go without thee now," Warwick told him.

And thus Little Shikara's dreams came true—to be known through many villages as a hunter of tigers, and a brave follower and comrade of the forest trails. And thus he came into his own—in those far-off glades of Burma, in the jungles of the Manipur.

THE MAN WHO CURSED THE LILIES

BY CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

From Short Stories

TEDGE looked from the pilot-house at the sweating deck-hand who stood on the stubby bow of the *Marie Louise* heaving vainly on the pole thrust into the barrier of crushed water hyacinths across the channel.

Crump, the engineer, shot a sullen look at the master ere he turned back to the crude oil motor whose mad pounding rattled the old bayou stern-wheeler from keel to hogchains.

"She's full ahead now!" grunted Crump. And then, with a covert glance at the single passenger sitting on the fore-deck cattle pens, the engineman repeated his warning, "Yeh'll lose the cows, Tedge, if you keep on fightin' the flowers. They're bad f'r feed and water—they can't stand another day o' sun!"

Tedge knew it. But he continued to shake his hairy fist at the deckhand and roar his anathemas upon the flower-choked bayou. He knew his crew was grinning evilly, for they remembered Bill Tedge's year-long feud with the lilies. Crump had bluntly told the skipper he was a fool for trying to push up this little-frequented bayou from Cote Blanche Bay to the higher land of the west Louisiana coast, where he had planned to unload his cattle.

Tedge had bought the cargo himself near Beaumont from a beggared ranchman whose stock had to go on the market because, for seven months, there had been no rain in eastern Texas, and the short-grass range was gone.

Tedge knew where there was feed for the starving animals, and the *Marie Louise* was coming back light. By the Inter-coastal Canal and the shallow string of bays along the Texas-Louisiana line, the bayou boat could crawl safely back to the

grassy swamp lands that fringe the sugar plantations of Bayou Teche. Tedge had bought his living cargo so ridiculously cheap that if half of them stood the journey he would profit. And they would cost him nothing for winter ranging up in the swamp lands. In the spring he would round up what steers had lived and sell them, grass-fat, in New Orleans. He'd land them there with his flap-paddle bayou boat, too, for the *Marie Louise* ranged up and down the Inter-coastal Canal and the uncharted swamp lakes and bays adjoining, trading and thieving and serving the skipper's obscure ends.

Only now, when he turned up Cote Blanche Bay, some hundred miles west of the Mississippi passes, to make the last twenty miles of swamp channel to his landing, he faced his old problem. Summer long the water hyacinths were a pest to navigation on the coastal bayous, but this June they were worse than Tedge had ever seen. He knew the reason: the mighty Mississippi was at high flood, and as always then, a third of its yellow waters were sweeping down the Atchafalaya River on a "short cut" to the Mexican Gulf. And somewhere above, on its west bank, the Atchafalaya levees had broken and the flood waters were all through the coastal swamp channels.

Tedge grimly knew what it meant. He'd have to go farther inland to find his free range, but now, worst of all, the floating gardens of the coast swamps were coming out of the numberless channels on the *crevasse* water.

He expected to fight them as he had done for twenty years with his dirty bayou boat. He'd fight and curse and struggle through the *îles flottantes*, and denounce the Federal Government, because it did not destroy the lilies in the obscure bayous where he traded, as it did on Bayou Teche and Terrebonne, with its pump-boats which sprayed the hyacinths with a mixture of oil and soda until the tops shrivelled and the trailing roots then dragged the flowers to the bottom.

"Yeh'll not see open water till the river cleans the swamps of lilies," growled Crump. "I never seen the beat of 'em! The high water's liftin' 'em from ponds where they never been touched by a boat's wheel and they're out in the channels now. If yeh make the plantations yeh'll have to keep east-ard and then up the Atchafalaya and buck the main flood water, Tedge!"

Tedge knew that, too. But he suddenly broke into curses upon his engineer, his boat, the sea and sky and man. But mostly the lilies. He could see a mile up the bayou between cypress-grown banks, and not a foot of water showed. A solid field of green, waxy leaves and upright purple spikes, jammed tight and moving. That was what made the master rage. They were moving—a flower glacier slipping imperceptibly to the gulf bays. They were moving slowly but inexorably, and his dirty cattle boat, frantically driving into the blockade, was moving backward—stern first!

He hated them with the implacable fury of a man whose fists had lorded his world. A water hyacinth—what was it? He could stamp one to a smear on his deck, but a river of them no man could fight. He swore the lilies had ruined his whisky-running years ago to the Atchafalaya lumber camps; they blocked Grand River when he went to log-towing; they had cost him thousands of dollars for repairs and lost time in his swamp ventures.

Bareheaded under the semi-tropic sun, he glowered at the lily-drift. Then he snarled at Crump to reverse the motor. Tedge would retreat again!

"I'll drive the boat clean around Southwest Pass to get shut of 'em! No feed, huh, for these cows! They'll feed sharks, they will! Huh, Mr. Cowman, the blisterin' lilies cost me five hundred dollars already!"

The lone passenger smoked idly and watched the gaunt cattle staggering, penned in the flat, dead heat of the fore-deck. Tedge cursed him, too, under his breath. Milt Rogers had asked to make the coast run from Beaumont on Tedge's boat. Tedge remembered what Rogers said—he was going to see a girl who lived up Bayou Bœuf above Tedge's destination. Tedge remembered that girl—a Cajan girl whom he once heard singing in the floating gardens while Tedge was battling and cursing to pass the blockade.

He hated her for loving the lilies, and the man for loving her. He burst out again with his volcanic fury at the green and purple horde.

"They're a fine sight to see," mused the other, "after a man's eyes been burned out ridin' the dry range; no rain in nine months up there—nothin' green or pretty in——"

"Pretty!" Tedge seemed to menace with his little shifty

eyes. "I wish all them lilies had one neck and I could twist it! Jest one head, and me stompin' it! Yeh!—and all the damned flowers in the world with it! Yeh! And me watchin' 'em die!"

The man from the dry lands smoked idly under the awning. His serenity evoked all the savagery of Tedge's feud with the lilies. Pretty! A man who dealt with cows seeing beauty in anything! Well, the girl did it—that swamp angel this Rogers was going to visit. That Aurelie Frenet who sang in the flower-starred river—that was it! Tedge glowered on the Texan—he hated him, too, because this loveliness gave him peace, while the master of the *Marie Louise* must fume about his wheelhouse, a perspiring madman.

It took an hour for the *Marie* even to retreat and find steerage-way easterly off across a shallow lake, mirroring the marsh shores in the sunset. Across it the bayou boat wheezed and thumped drearily, drowning the bellowing of the dying steers. Once the deckhand stirred and pointed.

"Lilies, Cap'n—pourin' from all the swamps, and dead ahead there now!"

Scowling, Tedge held to the starboard. Yes, there they were—a phalanx of flowers in the dusk. He broke into wild curses at them, his boat, the staggering cattle.

"I'll drive to the open gulf to get rid of 'em! Outside, to sea! Yeh! Stranger, yeh'll see salt water, and lilies drownin' in it! I'll show yeh 'em dead and dried on the sands like dead men's dried bones! Yeh'll see yer pretty flowers a-dyin'!"

The lone cowman ignored the sneer. "You better get the animals to feed and water. Another mornin' of heat and crowdin'——"

"Let 'em rot! Yer pretty flowers done it—pretty flowers—spit o' hell! I knowed 'em—I fought 'em—I'll fight 'em to the death of 'em!"

His little red-rimmed eyes hardly veiled his contempt for Milt Rogers. A cowman, sailing this dusky purple bay to see a girl! A girl who sang in the lily drift—a-sailing on this dirty, reeking bumboat, with cattle dying jammed in the pens! Suddenly Tedge realized a vast malevolent pleasure—he couldn't hope to gain from his perishing cargo; and he began to gloat at the agony spread below his wheelhouse window, and the cattleman's futile pity for them.

"They'll rot on Point Au Fer! We'll heave the stink of them, dead and alive, to the sharks of Au Fer Pass! Drownin' cows in dyin' lilies——"

And the small craft of his brain suddenly awakened coolly above his heat. Why, yes! Why hadn't he thought of it? He swung the stubby nose of the *Marie* more easterly in the hot, windless dusk. After a while the black deckhand looked questioningly up at the master.

"We're takin' round," Tedge grunted, "outside Au Fer!"

The black stretched on the cattle-pen frame. Tedge was a master-hand among the reefs and shoals, even if the flappaddle *Marie* had no business outside. But the sea was nothing but a star-set velvet ribbon on which she crawled like a dirty insect. And no man questioned Tedge's will.

Only, an hour later, the engineman came up and forward to stare into the faster-flowing water. Even now he pointed to a hyacinth clump.

"Yeh!" the master growled. "I'll show yeh, Rogers! Worlds o' flowers! Out o' the swamps and the tide 'll send 'em back again on the reefs. I'll show yeh 'em—dead, dried white like men's bones." Then he began to whisper huskily to his engineer: "It's time fer it. Five hundred fer yeh, Crump—a hundred fer the nigger, or I knock his head in. She brushes the bar, and yer oil tank goes—yeh understand?" He watched a red star in the south.

Crump looked about. No sail or light or coast guard about Au Fer—at low tide not even a skiff could find the passages. He nodded cunningly:

"She's old and fire-fitten. Tedge, I knowed yer mind—I was always waitin' fer the word. It's a place fer it—and yeh say yeh carry seven hundred on them cows? Boat an' cargo—three thousand seven hundred——"

"They'll be that singed and washed in the sands off Au Fer that nobody'll know what they died of!" retorted Tedge thickly. "Yeh, go down, Crump, and lay yer waste and oil right. I trust yeh, Crump—the nigger 'll get his, too. She'll ride high and burn flat, hoggin' in the sand——"

"She's soaked with oil plumb for'ard to the pens now," grunted Crump. "She's fitten to go like a match all along when she bumps——"

He vanished, and the master cunningly watched the ember star southeasterly.

He was holding above it now, to port and landward. The white, hard sands must be shoaling fast under the cattle-freighted *Marie*. It little mattered about the course now; she would grind her nose in the quiet reef shortly.

Tedge merely stared, expectantly awaiting the blow. And when it came he was malevolently disappointed. A mere slithering along over the sand, a creak, a slight jar, and she lay dead in the flat, calm sea—it was ridiculous that that smooth beaching would break an oil tank, that the engine spark would flare the machine waste, leap to the greasy beams and floors.

The wheezy exhaust coughed on; the belt flapped as the paddle wheel kept on its dead shove of the *Marie's* keel into the sand. Hogjaw had shouted and run forward. He was staring into the phosphorescent water circling about the bow when Crump raised his cry:

“Fire—amidships!”

Tedge ran down the after-stairs. Sulphurously he began cursing at the trickle of smoke under the motor frame. It was nothing—a child could have put it out with a bucket of sand. But upon it fell Tedge and the engineer, stamping, shouting, shoving oil-soaked waste upon it, and covertly blocking off the astounded black deckman when he rushed to aid.

“Water, Hogjaw!” roared the master. “She’s gainin’ on us—she’s under the bilge floor now!” He hurled a bucket viciously at his helper. And as they pretended to fight the fire, Crump suddenly began laughing and stood up. The deckman was grinning also. The master watched him narrowly.

“Kick the stuff into the waste under the stairs,” he grunted. “Hogjaw, this here boat’s goin’—yeh understand? We take the skiff and pull to the shrimp camps, and she hogs down and burns——”

The black man was laughing. Then he stopped curiously. “The cows——”

“Damn the cows! I’ll git my money back on ’em! Yeh go lower away on the skiff davits. Yeh don’t ask me nothin’—yeh don’t know nothin’!”

“Sho’, boss! I don’t know nothin’, or see nothin’!”

He swung out of the smoke already drifting greasily up from the foul waist of the *Marie Louise*. A little glare of red was beginning to reflect from the mirrored sea. The ripples of the beaching had vanished; obscurely, undramatically as she had lived, the *Marie Louise* sat on the bar to choke in her own fetid fumes.

Tedge clambered to the upper deck and hurried to his bunk in the wheelhouse. There were papers there he must save—the master's license, the insurance policy, and a few other things. The smell of burning wood and grease was thickening; and suddenly now, through it, he saw the quiet, questioning face of the stranger.

He had forgotten him completely. Tedge's small brain had room but for one idea at a time: first his rage at the lilies, and then the wrecking of the *Marie*. And this man knew. He had been staring down the after-companionway. He had seen and heard. He had seen the master and crew laughing while the fire mounted.

Tedge came to him. "We're quittin' ship," he growled.

"Yes, but the cattle——" The other looked stupefiedly at him.

"We got to pull inside afore the sea comes up——"

"Well, break the pens, can't you? Give 'em a chance to swim for a bar. I'm a cowman myself—I cain't let dumb brutes burn and not lift a hand——"

The fire in the waist was beginning to roar. A plume of smoke streamed straight up in the starlight. The glare showed the younger man's startled eyes. He shifted them to look over the foredeck rail down to the cattle. Sparks were falling among them, the fire veered slightly forward; and the survivors were crowding uneasily over the fallen ones, catching that curious sense of danger which forewarns creatures of the wild before the Northers, a burning forest, or creeping flood, to move on.

"You cain't leave 'em so," muttered the stranger. "No; I seen you——"

He did not finish. Tedge had been setting himself for what he knew he should do. The smaller man had his jaw turned as he stared at the suffering brutes. And Tedge's mighty fist struck him full on the temple. The master leaned over the low rail to watch quietly.

The man who wished to save the cattle was there among them. A little flurry of sparks drove over the spot he fell upon, and then a maddened surge of gaunt steers. Tedge wondered if he should go finish the job. No; there was little use. He had crashed his fist into the face of a shrimp-seine hauler once, and the fellow's neck had shifted on his spine—and once he had maced a woman up-river in a shantyboat drinking bout—Tedge had got away both times. Now and then, boasting about the shrimp camps, he hinted mysteriously at his two killings, and showed his freckled, hairy right hand.

"If they find anything of him—he got hurt in the wreck," the master grinned. He couldn't see the body, for a black longhorn had fallen upon his victim, it appeared. Anyhow, the cattle were milling desperately around in the pen; the stranger who said his name was Milt Rogers would be a lacerated lump of flesh in that mad stampede long ere the fire reached him. Tedge got his tin document box and went aft.

Crump and Hogjaw were already in the flat-bottomed bayou skiff, holding it off the *Marie Louise's* port runway, and the master stepped into it. The heat was singeing their faces by now.

"Pull off," grunted the skipper, "around east'ard. This bar sticks clean out o' water off there, and you lay around it, Hogjaw. They won't be no sea 'til the breeze lifts at sunup."

The big black heaved on the short oars. The skiff was a hundred yards out on the glassy sea when Crump spoke cunningly, "I knowed something——"

"Yeh?" Tedge turned from his bow seat to look past the oarsman's head at the engineman. "Yeh knowed——"

"This Rogers, he was tryin' to get off the burnin' wreck and he fell, somehow or——"

"The oil tank blew, and a piece o' pipe took him," grunted Tedge. "I tried to drag him out o' the fire—Gawd knows I did, didn't I, Crump?"

Crump nodded scaredly. The black oarsman's eyes narrowed and he crouched dumbly as he rowed. Tedge was behind him—Tedge of the *Marie Louise* who could kill with his fists. No, Hogjaw knew nothing—he never would know anything.

"I jest took him on out o' kindness," mumbled Tedge. "I got no license fer passenger business. Jest a bum I took on to go and see his swamp girl up Des Amoureux. Well, it ain't no use sayin' anything, is it now?"

A mile away the wreck of the *Marie Louise* appeared as a yellow-red rent in the curtain of night. Red, too, was the flat, calm sea, save northerly where a sand ridge gleamed. Tedge turned to search for its outlying point. There was a pass here beyond which the reefs began once more and stretched on, a barrier to the shoal inside waters. When the skiff had drawn about the sand spit, the reflecting waters around the *Marie* had vanished, and the fire appeared as a fallen meteor burning on the flat, black belt of encircling reef.

Tedge's murderous little eyes watched easterly. They must find the other side of the tidal pass and go up it to strike off for the distant shrimp camps with their story of the end of the *Marie Louise*—boat and cargo a total loss on Au Fer sands.

Upon the utter sea silence there came a sound—a faint bawling of dying cattle, of trampled, choked cattle in the fume and flames. It was very far off now; and to-morrow's tide and wind would find nothing but a blackened timber, a swollen, floating carcass or two—nothing more.

But the black man could see the funeral pyre; the distant glare of it was showing the whites of his eyes faintly to the master, when suddenly he stopped rowing. A drag, the soft sibilance of a moving thing, was on his oar blade. He jerked it free, staring.

"Lilies, boss—makin' out dis pass, too, lilies——"

"I see 'em—drop below 'em!" Tedge felt the glow of an unappeasable anger mount to his temples. "Damn 'em—I see 'em!"

They they were, upright, tranquil, immense hyacinths—their spear-points three feet above the water, their feathery streamers drifting six feet below; the broad, waxy leaves floating above their bulbous surface mats—they came on silently under the stars; they vanished under the stars seaward to their death.

"Yeh!" roared Tedge. "Sun and sea to-morry—they'll be back on Au Fer like dried bones o' dead men in the sand! Bear east'ard off of 'em!"

The oarsman struggled in the deeper pass water. The skiff bow suddenly plunged into a wall of green-and-purple bloom. The points brushed Tedge's cheek. He cursed and smote them, tore them from the low bow and flung them. But the engineman stood up and peered into the starlight.

"Yeh 'll not make it. Better keep up the port shore. I cain't see nothin' but lilies east'ard—worlds o' flowers comin' with the *crevasse* water behind 'em." He dipped a finger to the water, tasted of it, and grumbled on: "It ain't hardly salt, the big rivers are pourin' such a flood out o' the swamps. Worlds o' flowers comin' out the passes——"

"Damn the flowers!" Tedge arose, shaking his fist at them. "Back out o' 'em! Pull up the Au Fer side, and we'll break through 'em in the bay!"

Against the ebb tide close along Au Fer reef, the oarsman toiled until Crump, the lookout, grumbled again.

"The shoal's blocked wi' 'em! They're stranded on the ebb. Tedge, yeh'll have to wait for more water to pass this bar inside 'em. Yeh try to cross the pass, and the lilies 'll have us all to sea in this crazy skiff when the wind lifts wi' the sun."

"I'm clean wore out," the black man muttered. "Yeh can wait fer day and tide on the sand, boss."

"Well, drive her in, then!" raged the skipper. "The in-tide'll set before daylight. We'll take it up the bay."

He rolled over the bow, knee-deep in the warm inlet water, and dragged the skiff through the shoals. Crump jammed an oar in the sand; and warping the headline to this, the three trudged on to the white dry ridge. Tedge flung himself by the first stubby grass clump.

"Clean beat," he muttered. "By day we'll pass 'em. Damn 'em—and I'll see 'em dyin' in the sun—lilies like dried, dead weeds on the sand—that's what they'll be in a couple o' days—he said they was pretty, that fello' back there——" Lying with his head on his arm, he lifted a thumb to point over his shoulder. He couldn't see the distant blotch of fire against the low stars—he didn't want to. He couldn't mark the silent drift of the sea gardens in the pass, but he gloated in the thought that they were riding to their death. The pitiless sun, the salt tides drunk up to their spongy bulbs, and their glory passed—they would be matted refuse on the shores and

a man could trample them. Yes, the sea was with Tedge, and the rivers, too; the flood waters were lifting the lilies from their immemorable strongholds and forcing them out to their last pageant of death.

The three castaways slept in the warm sand. It was an hour later that some other living thing stirred at the far end of Au Fer reef. A scorched and weakened steer came on through salt pools to stagger and fall. Presently another, and then a slow line of them. They crossed the higher ridge to huddle about a sink that might have made them remember the dry drinking holes of their arid home plains. Tired, gaunt cattle mooing lonesomely, when the man came about them to dig with his bloody fingers in the sand.

He tried another place, and another—he didn't know—he was a man of the short-grass country, not a coaster; perhaps a sandy sink might mean fresh water. But after each effort the damp feeling on his hands was from his gashed and battered head and not life-giving water. He wiped the blood from his eyes and stood up in the starlight.

"Twenty-one of 'em—alive—and me," he muttered. "I got 'em off—they trampled me and beat me down, but I got their pens open. Twenty-one livin'—and me on the sands!"

He wondered stupidly how he had done it. The stern of the *Marie Louise* had burned off and sogged down in deep water, but her bow hung to the reef, and in smoke and flame he had fought the cattle over it. They clustered now in the false water-hole, silent, listless, as if they knew the uselessness of the urge of life on Au Fer reef.

And after a while the man went on eastward. Where and how far the sand ridge stretched he did not know. Vaguely he knew of the tides and sun to-morrow. From the highest point he looked back. The wreck was a dull red glow, the stars above it cleared now of smoke. The sea, too, seemed to have gone back to its infinite peace, as if it had washed itself daintily after this greasy morsel it must hide in its depths.

A half hour the man walked wearily, and then before him stretched water again. He turned up past the tide flowing down the pass—perhaps that was all of Au Fer. A narrow spit of white sand at high tide, and even over that, the sea breeze freshening, the surf would curl?

"Ships never come in close, they said," he mused tiredly. "and miles o' shoals to the land—and then just swamp for miles. Dumb brutes o' cows, and me on this—and no water nor feed, nor shade from the sun."

He stumbled on through the shallows, noticing apathetically that the water was running here. Nearly to his waist he waded, peering into the starlight. He was a cowman and he couldn't swim; he had never seen anything but the dry ranges until he said he would go find the girl he had met once on the upper Brazos—a girl who told him of sea and sunken forests, of islands of flowers drifting in lonely swamp lakes—he had wanted to see that land, but mostly the Cajan girl of Bayou Des Amoureux.

He wouldn't see her now; he would die among dying cattle, but maybe it was fit for a cattleman to go that way—a Texas man and Texas cows.

Then he saw a moving thing. It rode out of the dark and brushed him. It touched him with soft fingers and he drew them to him. A water hyacinth, and its purple spike topped his head as he stood waist-deep. So cool its leaves, and the dripping bulbs that he pressed them to his bloody cheek. He sank his teeth into them for that coolness on his parched tongue. The spongy bulb was sweet; it exhaled odorous moisture. He seized it ravenously. It carried sweet water, redolent of green forest swamps!

He dragged at another floating lily, sought under the leaves for the buoyant bulb. A drop or two of the fresh water a man could press from each!

Like a starving animal he moved in the shoals, seeing more drifting garden clumps. And then a dark object that did not drift. He felt for it slowly, and then straightened up, staring about.

A flat-bottomed bayou skiff, and in it the oars, a riverman's blanket-roll of greasy clothes, and a tin box! He knew the box. On one end, in faded gilt, was the name "B. Tedge." Rogers had seen it on the grimy shelf in the pilothouse on the *Marie Louise*. He felt for the rope; the skiff was barely scraping bottom. Yes, they had moored it here—they must be camped on the sands of Au Fer, awaiting the dawn.

A boat? He didn't know what a Texas cowman could do with a boat on an alien and unknown shore, but he slipped

into it, raised an oar, and shoved back from the sandy spit. At least he could drift off Au Fer's waterless desolation. Tedge would kill him to-morrow when he found him there; because he knew Tedge had fired the *Marie* for the insurance.

So he poled slowly off. The skiff drifted now. Rogers tried to turn to the oar athwart, and awkwardly he stumbled. The oar seemed like a roll of thunder when it struck the gunwale.

And instantly a hoarse shout arose behind him. Tedge's voice—Tedge had not slept well. The gaunt cattle burning or choking in the salt tide, or perhaps the lilies of Bayou Bœuf—anyhow, he was up with a cry and dashing for the skiff. In a moment Rogers saw him.

The Texas man began driving desperately on the oars. He heard the heavy rush of the skipper's feet in the deepening water. Tedge's voice became a bull-like roar as the depth began to check him. To his waist, and the slow skiff was but ten yards away; to his great shoulders, and the clumsy oarsman was but five.

And with a yell of triumph Tedge lunged out swimming. Whoever the fugitive, he was hopeless with the oars. The skiff swung this way and that, and a strong man at its stern could hurl it and its occupant bottom-side up in Au Fer Pass. Tedge, swimming in Au Fer Pass, his fingers to the throat of this unknown marauder! There'd be another one go—and nothing but his hands—Bill Tedge's hands that the shrimp camps feared.

Just hold him under—that was all. Tread water, and hold the throat beneath until its throbbing ceased. Tedge could; he feared no man. Another overhand stroke, and he just missed the wobbling stern of the light skiff.

He saw the man start up and raise an oar as if to strike. Tedge laughed triumphantly. Another plunge and his fingers touched the gunwale. And then he dived; he would bring his back up against the flat bottom and twist his enemy's footing from under him. Then in the deep water Tedge lunged up for the flat keel, and slowly across his brow an invisible hand seemed to caress him.

He opened his eyes to see a necklace of opalescent jewels gathering about his neck; he tore at it and the phosphorescent water gleamed all about him with feathery pendants. And

when his head thrust above water, the moment's respite had allowed the skiff to straggle beyond his reach.

Tedge shouted savagely and lunged again—and about his legs came the soft clasp of the drifting hyacinth roots. Higher, firmer; and he turned to kick free of them. He saw the man in the boat poling uncertainly in the tide not six feet beyond him. And now, in open water, Tedge plunged on in fierce exultance. One stroke—and the stars beyond the boatman became obscured; the swimmer struck the soft, yielding barrier of the floating islands. This time he did not lose time in drawing from them; he raised his mighty arms and strove to beat them down, flailing the broad leaves until the spiked blossoms fell about him. A circlet of them caressed his cheek. He lowered his head and swam bull-like into the drift; and when he knew the pressure ahead was tightening slowly to rubbery bands, forcing him gently from his victim, Tedge raised his voice in wild curses.

He fought and threshed the lilies, and they gave him cool, velvety kisses in return. He dived and came up through them; and then, staring upward, he saw the tall, purple spikes against the stars. And they were drifting—they were sailing seaward to their death. He couldn't see the boat now for the shadowy hosts; and for the first time fear glutted his heart. It came as a paroxysm of new sensation—Tedge of the *Marie Louise* who had never feared.

But this was different, this soft and moving web of silence. No, not quite silence, for past his ear the splendid hyacinths drifted with a musical creaking, leaf on leaf, the buoyant bulbs brushing each other. The islets joined and parted; once he saw open water and plunged for it—and over his shoulders there surged a soft coverlet. He turned and beat it; he churned his bed into a furious welter, and the silken curtain lowered.

He shrank from it now, staring. The feathery roots matted across his chest, the mass of them felt slimy like the hide of a drowned brute.

"Drownin' cows"—he muttered thickly—"comin' on a man driftin' and drownin'—no, no! Lilies, jest lilies—damn 'em!"

The tall spiked flowers seemed nodding—yes, just lilies, drifting and singing elfin music to the sea tide. Tedge roared

once again his hatred of them; he raised and battered his huge fists into their beauty, and they seemed to smile in the starlight. Then, with a howl, he dived.

He would beat them—deep water was here in the pass, and he would swim mightily far beneath the trailing roots—he would find the man with the boat yet and hurl him to die in the hyacinth bloom.

He opened his eyes in the deep, clear water and exulted. He, Tedge, had outwitted the bannered argosies. With bursting lungs he charged off across the current, thinking swiftly, coolly, now of the escape. And as he neared the surface he twisted to glance upward. It was light there—a light brighter than the stars, but softer, evanescent. Mullet and squib were darting about or clinging to a feathery forest that hung straight down upon him. Far and near there came little darts of pale fire, gleaming and expiring with each stir in the phosphorescent water.

And he had to rise; a man could not hold the torturing air in his lungs for ever. Yes, he would tear a path to the stars again and breathe. His arms flailed into the first tenuous streamers, which parted in pearly lace before his eyes. He breasted higher, and they were all about him now; his struggles evoked glowing bubble-jewels which drifted upward to expire. He grasped the soft roots and twisted and sought to raise himself. He had a hand to the surface bulbs, but a silken mesh seemed tightening about him.

And it was drifting—everything was drifting in the deep pass of Au Fer. He tried to howl in the hyacinth web, and choked—and then he merely fought in his close-pressing cocoon, thrusting one hard fist to grasp the broad leaves. He clung to them dumbly, his face so close to the surface that the tall spiked flowers smiled down—but they drifted inexorably with a faint, creaking music, leaf on leaf.

Tedge opened his eyes to a flicker of myriad lights. The sound was a roaring now—like the surf on the reefs in the hurricane month; or the thunder of maddened steers above him across this flowery sea meadow. Perhaps the man he had killed rode with this stampede? Tedge shrank under the lilies—perhaps they could protect him now? Even the last stroke of his hands made luminous beauty of the under-running tide.

An outward-bound shrimp lugger saw the figures on Au Fer reef and came to anchor beyond the shoals. The Cajan crew rowed up to where Milt Rogers and Crump and the black deckhand were watching by a pool. The shrimpers listened to the cowman, who had tied the sleeve of his shirt about his bloody head.

"You can get a barge down from Morgan City and take the cows off before the sea comes high," said Rogers quietly. "They're eating the lilies—and they find sweet water in 'em. Worlds o' lilies driftin' to sea with sweet water in the bulbs!" And he added, watching Crump and the black man who seemed in terror of him: "I want to get off, too. I want to see the swamp country where worlds o' flowers come from!"

He said no more. He did not even look in the pool where Crump pointed. He was thinking of that girl of the swamps who had bid him come to her. But all along the white surf line he could see the green-and-purple plumes of the hyacinth warriors tossing in the breeze—legion upon legion, coming to die gloriously on Au Fer's sands.

But first they sent a herald; for in Tedge's hand, as he lay in the pool, one waxen-leafed banner with a purple spear-point glittered in the sun.

THE URGE

By MARYLAND ALLEN

From Everybody's

SHE is now a woman ageless because she is famous. She is surrounded by a swarm of lovers and possesses a great many beautiful things. She has more than one Ming jar in the library at her country place; yards upon yards of point de Venise in her top bureau-drawer. She is able to employ a very pleasant, wholesome woman, whose sole duty it is to keep her clothes in order.

She wears superb clothes—the last word in richness and the elegance of perfection—clothes that no man can declaim over, stimulating himself the while with shot after shot of that most insidious of all dope, self-pity. You see, she earns them all herself, along with the Ming jars, the point de Venise, the country place, and countless other things. She is the funniest woman in the world—not in her press-agent's imagination, but in cold, sober fact. She can make anybody laugh; she does make everybody.

Night after night in the huge public theatres of the common people; in the small private ones of the commoner rich; in Greek amphitheatres where the laughter rolls away in thunderous waves to be echoed back by distant blue hills; in institutions for the blind; in convalescent wards; everywhere, every time, she makes them laugh. The day labourer, sodden and desperate from too much class legislation, the ego in his cosmos and the struggle for existence; the statesman, fearful of losing votes, rendered blue and depressed by the unruliness of nations and all the vast multitude of horrors that lie in between—all of these, all of them, she makes laugh. She is queen of the profession she has chosen—unusual for one of her sex. She is the funniest woman in the world.

When she is at home—which is seldom—she has many visitors and strives, if possible, to see none of them.

“You know, I entertain so much,” she pleads in that vivid, whimsical way of hers that holds as much of sadness as mirth.

But this time, it being so early in the afternoon, she was caught unawares.

The girls—they were nothing but girls, three of them—found her out upon the lawn, sitting on a seat where the velvety green turf fell away in a steep hillside, and far beneath them they could see the river moving whitely beyond the trees. They halted there before her, happy but trembling, giggling but grave. They were gasping and incoherent, full of apologies and absurd tremors. It had taken their combined week's savings to bribe the gardener. And they only wanted to know one thing: How had she achieved all this fame and splendour, by what magic process had she become that rarest of all living creatures, the funniest woman in the world?

It was an easy enough question to ask and, to them, hovering twittering upon high heels a trifle worn to one side, a simple one for her to answer. She looked at them in that humorous, kindly way of hers, looked at their silly, excited, made-up faces with noses sticking out stark, like handles, from a too-heavy application of purplish-white powder. Then her glance travelled down the velvety green slope to the bright river glancing and leaping beyond the shady trees.

Did she think of that other girl? Sitting there with that strange smile upon her face, the smile that is neither mirth nor sadness, but a poignant, haunting compound of both, did she remember her and the Urge that had always been upon her, racking her like actual pain, driving her with a whip of scorpions, flaying her on and on with a far more vivid sense of suffering than the actual beatings laid on by her mother's heavy hand, the thing that found articulation in the words, “I must be famous, I must!”

She belonged in the rear of a batch of a dozen, and had never been properly named. The wind was blowing from the stockyards on the dark hour when she arrived. It penetrated even to the small airless chamber where she struggled for her first breath—one of a “flat” in the poorest tenement in the

worst slum in Chicago. Huddled in smelly rags by a hastily summoned neighbour from the floor above, the newcomer raised her untried voice in a frail, reedy cry. Perhaps she did not like the smell that oozed in around the tightly closed window to combat the foul odours of the airless room. Whatever it was, this protest availed her nothing, for the neighbour hurriedly departed, having been unwilling from the first, and the mother turned away and lay close against the stained, discoloured wall, too apathetic, too utterly resigned to the fate life had meted out to her to accord this most unwelcome baby further attention. This first moment of her life might easily serve as the history of her babyhood.

Her father was also indifferent. He brought home his money and gave it to his wife—children were strictly none of his business. Her brothers and sisters, each one busily and fiercely fending for himself, gave no attention to her small affairs.

Tossed by the careless hand of Fate into the dark sea of life to swim or perish, she awoke to consciousness with but one thought—food; one ruling passion—to get enough. And since, in her habitual half-starved state, all food looked superlatively good to her, cake was the first word she learned to speak. It formed her whole vocabulary for a surprisingly long time, and Cake was the only name she was ever known by in her family circle and on the street that to her ran on and on and on as narrow and dirty, as crowded and as cruel as where it passed the great dilapidated old rookery that he'd the four dark rooms that she called home.

Up to the age of ten her life was sketchy. A passionate scramble for food, beatings, tears, slumber, a swift transition from one childish ailment to another that kept her forever out of reach of the truant officer.

She lay upon the floor in a little dark room, and through the window in the airless air-shaft, high up in one corner, she could see a three-cornered spot of light. At first she wondered what it was, since she lived in a tenement, not under the sky. Then it resolved itself into a ball, white and luminous, that floated remote in that high place and seemed to draw her, and was somehow akin to the queer, gnawing pain that developed about that time beneath her breastbone. It was all inarticulate, queer and confused. She did not think, she

did not know how. She only felt that queer gnawing beneath her breastbone, distinct from all her other pains, and which she ascribed to hunger, and saw the lovely, trembling globe of light. At first she felt it only when she was ill and lay on the tumbled floor bed and looked up through the dark window; afterward always in her dreams.

After she passed her tenth birthday the confusion within her seemed to settle as the queer pain increased, and she began to think, to wonder what it could be.

A year or two later her father died, and as she was the only child over whom her mother could exercise any control, the report of her death was successfully impressed upon the truant officer, so that she might be put to work unhindered to help the family in its desperate scramble for food, a scramble in which she took part with vivid earnestness. She was hired to Maverick's to wash dishes.

Maverick was a Greek and kept an open-all-night chop-house, a mean hole in the wall two doors from the corner, where Cake's surpassing thinness made her invaluable at the sink. Also the scraps she carried home in her red, water-puckered hands helped out materially. Then her mother took a boarder and rested in her endeavours, feeling she had performed all things well.

This boarder was a man with a past. And he had left it pretty far behind, else he had never rented a room and meals from the mother of Cake. In this boarder drink and debauchery had completely beaten out of shape what had once been a very noble figure of a man. His body was shrunken and trembling; the old, ragged clothes he wore flapped about him like the vestments of a scarecrow. His cheeks had the bruised congested look of the habitual drinker, his nose seemed a toadstool on his face, and his red eyes were almost vanished behind puffy, purple, pillow-like lids. His voice was husky and whispering, except when he raised it. Then it was surprisingly resonant and mellow, with something haunting in it like the echo of an echo of a very moving sweetness.

One night Cake, returning all weary and played-out from dish-washing at Maverick's, heard him speaking in this loud voice of his, pushed the door open a crack, and peeked in. He was standing in the middle of the floor evidently speaking what the child called to herself "a piece." Her big mouth

crooked derisively in the beginning of what is now her famous smile. The lodger went on speaking, being fairly well stimulated at the time, and presently Cake pushed the door wider and crept in to the dry-goods box, where her mother always kept a candle, and sat down.

The lodger talked on and on while Cake sat rapt, the flickering candle in her hands throwing strange lights and shadows upon her gaunt face. How was she to know she was the last audience of one of the greatest Shakespearian actors the world had ever seen?

It was a grave and wondering Cake that crept to her place to sleep that night between her two older sisters. And while they ramped against her and chewed and snorted in her ears, she listened all over again to that wonderful voice and was awed by the colour and beauty of the words that it had spoken. She slept, and saw before her the globe of light, trembling and luminous, the one bright thing of beauty her life had ever known, that seemed to draw her up from darkness slowly and with great suffering. Trembling and weeping she awoke in the dawn, and the strange pain that had tortured her so much and that she had called hunger and sought to assuage with scraps from the plates that came to the sink at Maverick's became articulate at last. With her hands clasped hard against her breast she found relief in words.

"I gotta be somebody," sobbed the child. "I mus' be famous, I mus'!"

She arose to find life no longer a confused struggle for food, but a battle and a march; a battle to get through one day to march on to the next, and so on and on until, in that long line of days that stretched out ahead of her like chambers waiting to be visited, she reached the one where rested Fame, that trembling, luminous globe of beauty it was so vitally necessary for her to achieve. "How come he c'n talk like that?" she demanded of herself, musing on the lodger's wonderful exhibition over the greasy dish-water at Maverick's.

And that night she asked him, prefacing her question with the offering of an almost perfect lamb-chop. Only one piece had been cut from it since the purchaser, at that moment apprised by Maverick himself that the arrival of the police was imminent, had taken a hasty departure.

"Who learned you to talk that-a-way?" demanded Cake,

licking a faint, far-away flavour of the chop from her long, thin fingers.

The lodger, for a moment, had changed places with the candle. That is to say, he sat upon the dry-goods box, the candle burned upon the floor. And, having been most unfortunate that day, the lodger was tragically sober. He bit into the chop voraciously, like a dog, with his broken, discoloured teeth.

"A book 'learned' me," he said, "and practice and experience—and something else." He broke off short. "They called it genius then," he said bitterly.

Cake took a short step forward. That thing beneath her prominent breastbone pained her violently, forced her on to speak.

"You learn me," she said.

The lodger ceased to chew and stared, the chop bone uplifted in his dirty hand. A pupil for him!

"You want to do this perhaps," he began. "Pray do not mock me; I am a very foolish, fond old man——"

The disreputable, swollen-faced lodger with a nose like a poisoned toadstool vanished. Cake saw an old white-haired man, crazy and pitiful, yet bearing himself grandly. She gasped, the tears flew to her eyes, blinding her. The lodger laughed disagreeably, he was gnawing on the chop bone again.

"I suppose you think because you've found me here it is likely I'll teach you—you! You starved alley cat!" he snarled.

Cake did not even blink. It is repetition that dulls, and she was utterly familiar with abuse.

"And suppose I did—'learn' you," he sneered, "what would *you* do with it?"

"I would be famous," cried Cake.

Then the lodger did laugh, looking at her with his head hanging down, his swollen face all creased and purple, his hair sticking up rough and unkempt. He laughed, sitting there a degraded, debauched ruin, looking down from the height of his memories upon the gaunt, unlovely child of the slums who was rendered even more unlovely by the very courage that kept her waiting beside the broken door.

"So you think I could learn you to be famous, hey?" Even

the words of this gutter filth he sought to construe into something flattering to himself.

Cake nodded. Really she had not thought of it that way at all. There was no thinking connected with her decision. The dumb hours she had spent staring up the air-shaft had resolved themselves with the passing years into a strange, numb will to do. There was the light and she must reach it. Indeed the Thing there behind the narrow walls of her chest gave her no alternative. She did not think she wanted to be an actress. It was a long time after that before she knew even what an actress was. She did not know what the lodger had been. No. Instinctively, groping and inarticulate, she recognized in him the rags and shreds of greatness, knew him to be a one-time dweller in that temple whither, willing or not, she was bound, to reach it or to die.

The lodger looked down at the naked chop bone in his hand. The juicy, broiled meat was comforting to his outraged stomach. Meat. The word stood out in his mind to be instantly followed by that other word that, for him, had spelled ruin, made him a ragged panhandler, reduced him to living among the poorest and most hopeless. Drink! He raised his head and eyed Cake with crafty calculation.

"What will you pay me for such teaching?" he demanded, and looked down again at the bone.

What he did in the end, Cake herself was satisfied came to him afterward. At first he was actuated only by the desire to procure food and drink—more especially the drink—at the cost of the least possible effort to himself.

Cake saw the look, and she knew. She even smiled a little in the greatness of her relief. She saw she had been right to bring the chop, and appreciated that her progress along road to fame would be as slow or fast as she could procure food for him in lesser or larger quantities.

"I'll bring you eats," she said cunningly. "From Maverick's," she added. By which she meant the eats would be "has-beens"—distinctly second class, quite possibly third.

The lodger nodded. "And booze," he put in, watching her face.

"And booze," Cake assented.

So the bargain was struck in a way that worked the most cruel hardship on the girl. Food she could steal and did.

blithely enough, since she had no monitor but the lure of brightness and that Thing within her breast that hotly justified the theft and only urged her on. But booze was a very different proposition. It was impossible to steal booze—even a little. To secure booze she was forced to offer money. Now what money Cake earned at Maverick's her mother snatched from her hand before she was well within the door. If she held out even a dime, she got a beating. And Cake's mother, in the later years of her life, besides being a clever evader of the police and the truant officer, developed into a beater of parts. Broken food the child offered in abundance and piteous hope. But the lodger was brutally indifferent.

"Food," he scoffed. "Why, it says in the Bible—you never heard of the Bible, hey?" Cake shook her tangled head.

"No? Well, it's quite a Book," commented the lodger. He had been fortunate that day and was, for him, fairly intoxicated. "And it says right in there—and some consider that Book an authority—man cannot live by food alone. Drink—I drink when I have occasion, and sometimes when I have no occasion—— Don't you know what drink is, alley-cat? Very well, then, wine is wont to show the mind of man, and you won't see mine until you bring me booze. Get out!"

And Cake got out. Also, being well versed in a very horrid wisdom, she took the food with her. This was hardly what the lodger had expected, and I think what respect he was capable of sprouted for her then.

Behind a screen of barrels in the corner of the alley Cake ate the broken meats herself, taking what comfort she could, and pondering the while the awful problem of securing the booze, since she must be taught, and since the lodger moved in her sphere as the only available teacher.

There was a rush up the alley past her hiding-place, a shout, and the savage thud of blows. Very cautiously, as became one wise in the ways of life in that place, Cake peered around a barrel. She saw Red Dan, who sold papers in front of Jere Dooley's place, thoroughly punishing another and much larger boy. The bigger boy was crying.

"Anybody c'n sell pi'pers," shouted Red Dan, pounding the information home bloodily. "You hear me?—anybody!"

Cake crept out of her hiding-place on the opposite side

She did not care what happened to the bigger boy, though she respected Red Dan the more. She knew where the money was going to come from to buy the lodger's booze. It meant longer hours for her; it meant care to work only out of school hours; it meant harder knocks than even she had experienced; it meant a fatigue there were no words to describe even among the beautiful, wonderful, colourful ones the lodger taught her. But she sold the papers and she purchased the booze.

Her mother did not know where she spent this extra time. She did not care since the money came in from Maverick's steadily each week. Neither did the lodger care how the booze was procured; the big thing to him was that it came.

At first these lessons were fun for him; the big, gawky, half-starved, overworked child seeing so vividly in pictures all that he told her in words. Full-fed on the scraps from Maverick's—he was no longer fastidious—well stimulated by the drink she brought, he took an ugly sort of degraded pleasure in posturing before her, acting as he alone could act those most wonderful of all plays, watching with hateful, sardonic amusement the light and shadow of emotion upon her dirty face. Oh, he was a magician, no doubt at all of that! Past master in the rare art of a true genius, that of producing illusion.

Then he would make Cake try, rave at her, curse her, strike her, kill himself laughing, drink some more and put her at it again.

Night after night, almost comatose from the fatigue of a day that began while it was still dark, she carried a heaped-up plate and a full bottle to the lodger's room and sat down upon the dry-goods box with the candle beside her on the floor. And, having thus secured her welcome, night after night she walked with him among that greatest of all throngs of soldiers and lovers, kings and cardinals, queens, prostitutes and thieves.

If the liquor was short in the bottle a dime's worth, the lesson was curtailed. At first Cake tried to coax him. "Aw, c'mon, yuh Romeo on th' street in Mantua."

But the lodger was never so drunk that he made the slightest concession.

"Yes, I'm Romeo all right—the lad's there, never fear, gutter-snipe. But—the bottle is not full."

After that she never attempted to change his ruling. She

was letter perfect in the bitter lesson, and if the sale of papers did not bring in enough to fill the bottle, she accepted the hard fact with the calm of great determination and did not go near the lodger's room, but went to bed instead.

Perhaps it was these rare occasions of rest that kept her alive.

After the lodger had been teaching her for several years her mother died and was buried in the potters' field. Cake managed to keep two rooms of the wretched flat, and no word of his landlady's demise reached the lodger's drink-dulled ears. Otherwise Cake feared he might depart, taking with him her one big chance to reach the light. You see, she did not know the lodger. Things might have been different if she had. But he was never a human being to her, even after she knew the truth; only a symbol, a means to the great end.

Her brothers went away—to the penitentiary and other places. One by one the flood of life caught her sisters and swept them out, she did not know to what. She never even wondered. She had not been taught to care. She had never been taught anything. The knowledge that she must be famous danced through her dreams like a will-o'-the-wisp; had grown within her in the shape of a great pain that never ceased; only eased a little as she strove mightily toward the goal.

So she still sold papers, a homely, gawky, long-legged girl in ragged clothes much too small for her, and slaved at Maverick's for the lodger's nightly dole that he might teach her and she be famous.

At first he was keen on the meat and drink—more especially the drink. Later, gradually, a change came over him. Only Cake did not notice this change. She was too set on being taught so she could become famous. At first the lodger was all oaths and blows with shouts of fierce, derisive laughter intermingled.

"My God!" he would cry. "If Noyes could only see this—if he only could!"

This Noyes, it appeared, was a man he furiously despised. When he was in the third stage of drunkenness he would never teach Cake, but would only abuse his enemies, and this Noyes invariably came in for a fearful shower of epithets. It was he as Cake heard it, sitting huddled on the old dry-goods box,

the candle casting strange shadows into her gaunt, unchild-like face, who was the cause of the lodger's downfall. But for Noyes—with a blasting array of curses before the name—he would now have what Cake so ardently strove for: Fame. But for Noyes he would be acting in his own theatre, riding in his own limousine, wearing his own diamonds, entertaining his own friends upon his own gold plate.

When he was still too sober to take a really vital interest in the teaching, he was a misanthrope, bitter and brutal, with an astonishing command of the most terrible words. At these times he made the gravest charges against Noyes; charges for which the man should be made accountable, even to such a one as the lodger. One evening Cake sat watching him, waiting for this mood to pass so that the teaching might begin.

"If I was youse," she said at last, "and hated a guy like youse do this Noyes, I'd fetch 'im a insult that'd get under his skin right. I'd make evens wit' 'im, I would, not jes' talk about it."

"Oh, you would!" remarked the lodger. He took a long pull at the bottle. "You be *Queen Kathrine*, you alley-cat."

So the nightly teaching began with the usual accompaniment of curses, blows, and shouts of brutal laughter. But when it was over and the lodger was sinking to the third stage that came inevitably with the bottom of the bottle, he kept looking at his pupil queerly.

"Oh, you would! Oh, you would, would you?" He said it over and over again. "Oh, you would, would you?"

And after that he was changed by the leaven of hate her suggestion had started working in him. For one thing, he took a far greater interest in the teaching for its own sake. Of that much the girl herself was thankfully aware. And she thought, Cake did, that the dull husk of self was wearing away from that part of her destined to be famous, wearing away at last. The lodger's curses changed in tone as the nights filed past, the blows diminished, the laughter became far more frequent.

Cake, as rapidly reaching the end of her girlhood as the lodger was nearing the limits of his drink-sapped strength, redoubled her efforts. It was very plain to her that he could not live much longer; death in delirium tremens was inevit-

able. After that, she decided, school would not keep, and she must try her fortune.

Then one night in the midst of the potion scene when she felt herself *Juliet*, soft, passionate, and beautiful, far away in the land of tragic romance, she heard the lodger crying:

"Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way? Don't you know there's a limit to human endurance, alley-cat?"

He was fairly toppling from the dry-goods box. His eyes were popping from his head, and in the flickering candlelight his face looked strained and queer. In after life she became very familiar with that expression; she saw it on all types of faces. In fact, she came to expect to see it there. But she did not know how to analyze it then. She glimpsed it only as a tribute to her performance, so immense that she had to be halted in the middle, and felt correspondingly elated. She was exactly right in her deduction. But Cake and the lodger advanced along very different lines of thought.

The next night he was shaky, came all too quickly to the teaching period, and left it as speedily. Then he retired to the flock mattress in the corner of the room and called Cake to bring the candle.

"I've an idea I'm going to leave you, gutter-snipe," he said, "and I doubt if I ever see you again. The end of life cancels all bands. And the one that bound you to me, alley-cat, was very material, very material indeed. The kind that runs easily in and out of a black bottle." He laughed

"You Shakespearian actress!" He laughed again, longer this time. "But I have not forgotten you," he resumed. "In addition to all that I have taught you, I am going to leave you something. Here," he fumbled out a square envelope and Cake took it between her hands. "Take that to the address written on it," said the lodger, "and see what the gentleman does." He began to laugh again.

"Noyes——" he cried and broke off to curse feebly but volubly. Cake did not even glance in his direction. She went away out of the room, too utterly stunned with fatigue to look at the letter in her dingy hand.

The next morning the lodger was dead. He was buried in the potters' field quite near his old landlady.

This second funeral, such as it was, closed the shelter that

Cake, for want of a more fitting name, had called home. She decided to put all her years of bitterly acquired learning to the test. And as she best knew what she had bought and paid for it, she felt she could not fail. She unfolded from a scrap of newspaper the envelope presented her by the lodger and carefully studied the address.

Cake could both read and write, having acquired these arts from a waiter at Maverick's, who also helped her steal the broken meats with which she secured her artistic education. And, watching the steady disappearance of the food, this waiter marvelled that she got no fatter as she grew upward, hovering about in hope of becoming her lover if she ever did. But even if that miracle had ever been accomplished the helpful waiter would still have waited. Cake's conception of a real lady was *Queen Katherine*; *Cleopatra* her dream of a dangerous, fascinating one. And what chance in the world for either with a waiter?

Cake read the name and address upon the envelope freely as the hopeful bread-caster had taught her: Arthur Payson Noyes, National Theatre. With the simplicity and dispatch that characterized her, she went to that place. To the man reposing somnolently in the broken old chair beside the door she said she had a letter for Mr. Noyes. The doorkeeper saw it was a large, swanking envelope with very polite writing. He straightened up in the chair long enough to pass her in, and then slumped down again.

Cake found herself in a queer, barnlike place, half room and half hallway, feebly illumined by a single electric bulb suspended above the door. Very composedly she looked about her. If Mr. Arthur Noyes lived in this place, he was one of her own kind and there was no need for any palpitation on her part. Anyway, she was looking solely for her chance to become famous, and she brought to this second stage of her search the same indifference to externals, the same calm, unfaltering courage as she had to the first.

"Now, then," said a voice briskly. "Say what you want. We have not advertised for any extra people. At least—not this year."

A short, stout man emerged from the shadows. He was very blond, with his hair cut snapper, and his pale eyes popped perpetual astonishment. She returned his look steadily and

well. She knew she was born to be famous, and fame has a certain beauty of dignity utterly lacking in mere success.

"I am not an extra person," she replied. "I have come to see Mr. Noyes," and she displayed once more the large square envelope, her legacy from the lodger, the knife with which she proposed to shuck from its rough shell that oyster, the world.

The man looked even more astonished, if the thing could have been accomplished, and regarded her keenly—stared.

"Come this way," he said.

Cake followed him along a narrow passage that turned off to the right, down five steps, across a narrow entry, up three more steps—although it seems quite silly, she never in her life forgot the odd number of those worn steps—and halted before a closed door. On this the fat man knocked once and opened immediately without waiting.

"Someone I think you'll see," he said, standing between Cake and the interior. There came to her a murmur over his chunky shoulder.

"She has a letter from——" The fat man dropped his voice and mumbled. "Positive," he said, aloud, after a pause broken only by the vague murmur within the room. "I'd know his fist anywhere. Yes." Then he pushed the door open wide, stood aside, and looked at Cake. "Walk in," he said.

She did so. Beautifully. Poems have been written about her walk. Two kinds.

The room she entered was square, with concrete floor and rough walls. But Cake did not notice the room for three reasons: The rug on the floor, four pictures on the walls, and the man who looked at her as she entered.

They gazed at each other, Cake and this man, with sudden, intense concentration. He was a genius in his line, she as surely one in hers. And, instinctively, to that strange, bright flame each rendered instant homage. What he saw he described long afterward when a million voices were vociferously raised in a million different descriptions. What she saw she likened in her mind to a dark sheath from which a sword flashed gloriously. That sword was his soul.

"He says your name is Plain Cake—is that true?" He referred to the lodger's letter held open in his hand, and by that

she knew he was Arthur Noyes. And great. That last she had not needed any telling.

"Yes," she replied.

"He says you are the right Shakespearian actress for me," Noyes referred to the letter again. "Do you know Shakespeare?"

"All the way," said Cake. It was not quite the answer *Queen Katherine* might have made, perhaps, but her manner was perfect.

"Come here"—he pointed to the centre of the rapturous rug—"and do the potion scene for me." Cake stepped forward.

Perhaps you have been so fortunate as to see her. If so you know that to step forward is her only preparation. She was poised, she was gone. Then suddenly she heard the lodger's voice crying:

"Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way? Don't you know there's a limit to human endurance, alley-cat?"

She broke off, staring confusedly into space just the height of his debauched old figure crouching on the dry-goods box. Then with swift realization of her surroundings, her vision cleared. It was the fat man in the checked suit she saw leaning helplessly against the closed door. His jaw sagged, his eyes were frightfully popped, his face wore the same strained, queer look she had come to see so often on the lodger's, and he made weak little flapping gestures with his hands.

Cake looked then at Arthur Noyes. His face was white as the letter in his hand, his dark eyes were dilated with a look of dreadful suffering, the numb, unconscious reaction of one who has received a mortal blow.

"Come here, Crum," he cried as if there was no one else in the room. And Crum fairly tottered forward.

"What do you make of this?" asked Noyes, while Cake stood and listened.

"I—I——" stammered Crum exhaustedly. "My God," he groaned, "it's too much for me. And training!"

"Oh, trained," Cake heard Noyes say. "Such training as only he could give. Years of it, that's plain. And then to send her to me. A Shakespearean actress for me! To insult me like that——"

"It's too much for me, Boss," said Crum again. "Still— Oh—oh, my!" His back was turned, but Cake saw his whole body shake.

"Telephone Meier," exclaimed Noyes suddenly.

"Meier?" Crum became immediately composed, and Cake saw that he was tremendously surprised. "You don't mean that you're going to— After this? Why, she's in the know. Look at her. It's perfect!"

And they both turned and looked at Cake standing unconscious and serene on the other side of the room. You who have seen her know just how perfect the pose was.

"It *is* perfect," Noyes said. "I'd be a pretty poor sport if I did not acknowledge that." Then his voice dropped and Cake only caught snatches here and there. ". . . such genius . . . once in a century . . . get even with him in a way he least expects . . . wipe off the slate entirely . . . no comeback to my play . . . let him see that for himself. Call Meier." Then he turned to Cake.

"Sit down, please," he said courteously. "I have sent for a man who may give you an engagement."

She returned his gaze so quietly that he was puzzled. About her was neither nervous anticipation nor flighty vivacity. The actions of her audience of two left her incurious and calm. You see, she was used to the lodger. Also she had worked to be famous so long that all the flowery borders of self were worn down to the keen edge of doing. Of Plain Cake she thought not at all. But then, she never had. Only of the light at the end of the passage that now loomed so bright to her watching eyes.

It seemed only a minute before Noyes spoke again: "This is Mr. Meier." He regarded her shrewdly all the time.

Cake bowed to Mr. Meier, a fat, gaudy gentleman with thick, hairy hands. And Mr. Meier looked at Noyes and shook his head. She realized they had already been talking together.

"Never before," Mr. Meier said.

"If you will repeat the potion scene," Arthur Noyes suggested. "This time, I trust, you will not be interrupted," he added politely.

And Cake stepped once more into that rich orgy of emotion.

This time, though dimly aware of noise and a confusion of shouting, she carried the scene through to the end. "Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee." She lay for a moment where she had fallen close to the heavenly colours of the rug.

"Goo-hood Gaw-hud!" gasped Mr. Meier, and Cake sat up.

She saw he was rather collapsed upon a chair near which he had been standing up when she began. His fat face was purple, and tears stood in his eyes. But Arthur Noyes had not changed. White, with that look of mortal hurt, he still stood straight and slim against the table.

"You cannot offer her less than two hundred a week to begin," he said with the same air of being alone with Mr. Meier.

"No, oh, no, no, no, no!" sighed Mr. Meier, wiping his eyes.

He rose and bowed to Cake with the queerest respect, still wiping his eyes with the back of his thick, hairy hands. It was a striking commentary upon her years of training that both of these men, successful from long and hard experience, paid her the compliment of thinking her an old hand at the game.

"Mine is the Imperial Theatre, Miss," said Meier. "You should be there to-night by seven o'clock. It ain't necessary we should rehearse. No, oh, no, no, no, no! And now, perhaps"—he looked her up and down, oddly—"perhaps I can take you to your—hotel?"

Cake looked him back, serene in her belief in what the lodger had taught her.

"I'll be there at seven," she said. "No, thank you." She walked out and across into a small park where she sat until the appointed time.

Then she went to the stage entrance of the Imperial Theatre, presented the card Mr. Meier had given her, and entered. Once inside she was taken to a dressing room by a fat, comfortable, middle-aged woman who seemed to be waiting for her. After a very short and, to Cake, tranquil period, Mr. Meier bustled in.

"Of course, Miss, you know this is a Revue," he explained, rubbing his hands with a deference that Cake shed utterly, because she did not know it was there.

She nodded, accepting his statement. "We make 'em laugh here," said Mr. Meier. Again Cake nodded; she knew

exactly as much about the show as she did before. "You close the second act; it's the best place for you. Leafy, here, will help you dress."

Cake sat still while Leafy dressed her, very hushed and still. The light blazed so near after all these hard, lean years of pursuit, years in which the little affairs of life, like the business of growing from a child to a woman, had simply passed her by. Of that Urge to be famous she was even more burningly aware; herself she did not know at all.

Mr. Meier came and took her by the hand. His fat face was pale and sweating, he seemed almost awestruck by Cake's calm. He drew her out of the dressing room and through a crowd of people, men and women with painted faces, some beautifully, some extravagantly and strangely dressed. They all stared. One woman shook her head. A man said: "Search me! I never saw *her* before."

Then Mr. Meier thrust her out in the face of a bright light. "Begin," he said hoarsely. "Walk over there and begin."

Quietly Cake obeyed. She had walked right into the bright light that had drawn her so hard and so long. Of course it was time for her to begin. And with this bright light in her face, which soon became to her the candle in that dark room left so far behind, she fared away to the magic land of beautiful make-believe.

And only when *Juliet*, that precocious child, sank down poisoned did she become aware of the uproar about her. The shouts of the lodger, "Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way?" augmented a million times. It was this she heard.

Slowly Cake lifted herself on her hands, dazedly she peered through the heart of the great light that had caused her such suffering and that she had followed faithfully so bitterly long. On the other side she saw faces, rows and rows of them mounting up to the very roof. Faces laughing; faces convulsed, streaming with tears; faces with eyes fixed and wearing that same queer, strained look she had noticed before; hundreds of faces topping each other in semicircular rows, all different but all alike in that they were all laughing.

She rose to her knees and rested there on all fours—staring. Laughter! A great clapping of hands rolled about her like

thunder, dying down and rising again to even greater volume. Cries of "Go on," assailed her ears, mingled with, "Stop, stop! I can't bear it!"

The curtain fell before her, blotting out the vision of those faces, making the uproar slightly dimmer. Mr. Meier advanced and lifted her to her feet. He moved weakly, exhausted with mirth.

"Even Noyes," he gasped. "He—he can't help it. Oh, my goo-hood Gaw-hud!"

Cake looked away from him to the men and women that thronged about her. The same faces that had turned to her such a short while ago; but now, how different!

"Oh, don't criticise," one woman cried. "Hand it to her! She can't be beat. She's the one that comes once in a century to show the rest of us what really can be done."

"Meier," shouted a man. "Meier—she'll have to go back, Meier; she's stopped the show."

Quiet and very still, Cake drew away.

It seemed to her only a moment later that Leafy touched her arm.

"Mr. Meier has taken a suite for you here in this hotel," she said. "Can't you eat a little, Miss?"

Eat? She had never had enough to eat in her life. Her life? She had spent her life securing food for the lodger that he might teach her to be famous. Leafy lifted the spoon of hot soup to her lips and immediately she drank—she who had never had enough to eat in her life. Morsel by morsel from the bountifully filled table the kindly dresser fed her. Obediently she ate, and the hot, rich food stimulated her to swifter, more agonizing thought.

Then, for the first time, she saw Arthur Noyes standing with his back against a closed door. She read pity in his eyes, comprehension, great wonder, and what she did not know then was the love that came to a rare perfection between them and has never faded—and has no place in this story.

"Will you tell me," he said, "what your name is, where your home is, and who are those that love you there?"

Then he broke off and shrank a little against the door. "Oh, don't," he protested.

Yet she had only looked at him and smiled. But it came

to her keenly in her new awareness that his questions covered the whole of a woman's life: Her name, her home, and the ones that loved her there. While she—she had no name, she did not even know the lodger's name. She looked down with strange astonishment at her grown-up figure, her woman's hands. She saw herself a ragged, gaunt, bushy-headed child moving on a tight rope above a dark abyss, intent only upon a luminous globe floating just out of reach ahead of her, that she stretched out for eagerly with both her hands. Suddenly the lovely bubble burst and the child was a woman, falling and falling among rows of convulsed, shining white faces to the sound of gargantuan laughter.

"You tell me," Arthur Noyes pleaded gently.

And she did so very simply and beautifully. She did know Shakespeare; it was the only English that she had ever been taught. So Noyes heard how she became an instrument in the hands of the man who hated him mortally, and owed her *début* and her terrible awakening to what he considered the only sporting answer to that insult. While he listened he pondered, awestruck, upon the fact that out of all this muck and blackness, the degradation of hate by the lodger, the refinement of hate by himself, had flowered that rarest of all human creatures—one that could make the whole world laugh.

"He always hated me," he said. "I told him he had traded his genius for drink, and he never forgave me. Where is he now?"

"Now?" Cake looked up at him in startled wonder. It came over her suddenly that he counted upon the lodger's being in the Imperial Theatre that night.

"Now?" she repeated. "Why, he is dead."

It took Noyes a minute to recover. "What will you do?" he asked her. "Will you go on from this start, continue this—this sort of success?" He felt it the basest cruelty, in the face of her story, to say it was the only kind she was ever destined to make. He waited for her answer, wondering, and a little awestruck. It seemed to him they had come to the supreme test of her genius.

And she looked up at him with such sadness and such mirth—such tragic, humorous appreciation of the darkness in which she had been born, the toilsome way she had travelled

to the Great Light and what it actually revealed when she arrived.

"I will go on from this success," she said. Involuntarily she raised her hand to her breast. "I must, since it is the only way for me. You see," with a humour far more touching than the saddest tears, "I must be famous."

And she smiled that smile that hurt him, the smile the world loves and will give anything to see.

The most famous funmaker of her time looked away from the bright river fleeting beyond the trees to her giggling, half-terrified visitors.

"Fame," she said, "is a secret that cannot be told. It must be discovered by the seeker. Let me offer you tea as a substitute."

MUMMERY

By THOMAS BEER

From Saturday Evening Post

ON MONDAY Mrs. Egg put her husband on the east-bound express with many orders. He was not to annoy Adam by kissing him when they met, if they met in public. He was to let Adam alone in the choice of civil dress, if Adam wanted to change his naval costume in New York. He was not to get lost in Brooklyn, as he had done before. He was to visit the largest moving-picture theatres and report the best films on his return. She made sure that Egg had her written list of lesser commands safe in his wallet, then folded him to her bosom, sniffed, and patted him up the steps of the coach.

A red-haired youth leaned through an open window and inquired, "Say, lady, would you mind tellin' me just what you weigh?"

"I ain't been on the scales in years, bub," said Mrs. Egg equably; "not since about when you was born. Does your mamma ever wash out your mouth with soap?"

An immediate chorus of laughter broke from the platform loungers. The train jerked forward. The youth pulled in his head. Mrs. Egg stood puffing triumphantly with her hands on her hips.

"It's a shame," the baggage-master told her, "that a lady can't be kind of—kind of——"

"Fat," said Mrs. Egg; "and bein' tall makes it worse. All the Packers 've always been tall. When we get fat we're holy shows. But if that kid's mother's done her duty by him he'd keep his mouth shut."

The dean of the loungers put in, "Your papa was always skinny, Myrtle."

"I can't remember him much," Mrs. Egg panted, "but

he looks skinny in his pictures. Well, I got to get home. There's a gentleman coming over from Ashland to look at a bull."

She trod the platform toward the motor at the hitching rails, and several loungers came along gallantly. Mrs. Egg cordially thanked them as she sank into the driving seat, settled her black straw hat, and drove off.

Beholding two of her married daughters on the steps of the drug store, she stopped the car and shouted: "Hey, girls, the fleet's gettin' in to-morrow. Your papa's gone to meet Dammy. I just shoved him on the train. By gee! I forgot to tell him he was to fetch home—no, I wrote that down—well, you come out to supper Wednesday night."

"But can Dammy get discharged all in one day?" a daughter asked.

Mrs. Egg had no patience with such imbecility. She snapped, "Did you think they'd discharge him a foot at a time, Susie?" and drove on up the street, where horse-chestnuts were ready to bloom, appropriately, since Adam was fond of the blossoms. She stopped the car five times to tell the boys that Adam would be discharged to-morrow, and made a sixth stop at the candy shop, where a clerk brought out a chocolate ice cream with walnut sauce. He did this mechanically. Mrs. Egg beamed at him, although the fellow was a newcomer and didn't know Adam.

"My boy'll be home Wednesday," she said, giving the dish back.

"Been in the Navy three-four years, ain't he?"

Mrs. Egg sighed. "April 14, 1917. He was twenty-one las' week, so he gets discharged soon as the fleet hits New York. My gee, think of Dammy being twenty-one!"

She drove on, marvelling at time, and made her seventh stop at the moving-picture theatre. The posters of the new feature film looked dull. The heavily typed list of the current-events weekly took her sharp eye. She read, "Rome Celebrates Anniversary—Fleet Sails from Guantánamo," and chuckled. She must drive in to see the picture of the fleet. She hadn't time to stop now, as lunch would be ready. Anyhow, night was the time for movies. She drove on, and the brick business buildings gave out into a dribble of small

frame cottages, mostly shabby. Edith Webb was coming out of her father's gate.

Mrs. Egg made an eighth halt and yelled, "Hey, Edie, Dammy'll be home Wednesday night," for the pleasure of seeing the pretty girl flush. Adam had taken Edith to several dances at Christmas. Mrs. Egg chuckled as the favoured virgin went red, fingering the top of the gatepost. Edith would do. In fact, Edith was suitable, entirely.

"Well, I'm glad," the girl said. "Oh, say, was it our house or the next one you used to live in? Papa was wondering last night."

"It was yours," Mrs. Egg declared; "and thank your stars you've got a better father than I had, Edie. Yes, right here's where I lived when I was your age and helped Mamma do sewin', and sometimes didn't get enough to eat. I wonder if that's why—well, anyhow, it's a solid-built house. I expect Dammy'll call you up Wednesday night." She chuckled immensely and drove on again.

From the edge of town she passed steadily a quarter of a mile between her husband's fields. His cows were grazing in the pastures. His apple trees were looking well. The red paint of his monstrous water tanks soothed her by their brilliance. A farmhand helped her out of the car and she took the shallow veranda steps one at a time, a little moody, wishing that her mother was still alive to see Adam's glory. However, there were six photographs of Adam about the green sitting room in various uniforms, and these cheered her moment of sorrow. They weren't altogether satisfactory. His hard size didn't show in single poses. He looked merely beautiful. Mrs. Egg sniffled happily, patting the view of Adam in white duck. The enlarged snapshot portrayed him sitting astride a turret gun. It was the best of the lot, although he looked taller in wrestling tights, but that picture worried her. She had always been afraid that he might kill someone in a wrestling match. She took the white-duck photograph to lunch and propped it against the pitcher of iced milk.

"It'll be awful gettin' him clothes," she told the cook; "except shoes. Thank God, his feet ain't as big as the rest of him! Say, remind me to make a coconut cake in the morning in the big pan. He likes 'em better when they're two

or three days old so the icin's kind of spread into the cake. I'd of sent a cake on with his papa, but Mr. Egg always drops things so much. It does seem——" The doorbell rang. Mrs. Egg wiped her mouth and complained, "Prob'ly that gentleman from Ashland to look at that bull calf. It does seem a shame folks drop in at mealtimes. Well, go let him in, Sadie."

The cook went out through the sitting room and down the hall. Mrs. Egg patted her black hair, sighed at her third chop and got up. The cook's voice mingled with a drawling man's tone. Mrs. Egg drank some milk and waited an announcement. The cook came back into the dining room and Mrs. Egg set down the milk glass swiftly, saying, "Why, Sadie!"

"He—he says he's your father, Mis' Egg."

After a moment Mrs. Egg said, "Stuff and rubbidge! My father ain't been seen since 1882. What's the fool look like?"

"Awful tall—kinda skinny—bald——"

A tremor went down Mrs. Egg's back. She walked through the sitting room and into the sunny hall. The front door was open. Against the apple boughs appeared a black length, topped by a gleam. The sun sparkled on the old man's baldness. A shivering memory recalled that her father's hair had been thin. His dark face slid into a mass of twisting furrows as Mrs. Egg approached him.

He whispered, "I asked for Myrtle Packer down round the station. An old feller said she was married to John Egg. You ain't Myrtle?"

"I'm her," said Mrs. Egg.

Terrible cold invaded her bulk. She laced her fingers across her breast and gazed at the twisting face.

The whisper continued: "They tell me your mamma's in the cem'tery, Myrtle. I've come home to lay alongside of her. I'm grain for the grim reaper's sickle. In death we sha'n't be divided; and I've walked half the way from Texas. Don't expect you'd want to kiss me. You look awful like her, Myrtle."

Tears rolled out of his eyes down his hollowed cheeks, which seemed almost black between the high bones. His pointed chin quivered. He made a wavering gesture of both

hands and sat down on the floor. Behind Mrs. Egg the cook sobbed aloud. A farmhand stood on the grass by the outer steps, looking in. Mrs. Egg shivered. The old man was sobbing gently. His head oscillated and its polish repelled her. He had abandoned her mother in 1882.

"Mamma died back in 1910," she said. "I dunno—well——"

The sobbing was thin and weak, like an ailing baby's murmur. It pounded her breast.

She stared at the ancient dusty suitcase on the porch and said, "Come up from Texas, have you?"

"There's no jobs lef' for a man seventy-six years of age, Myrtle, except dyin.' I run a saloon in San Antonio by the Plaza. Walked from Greenville, Mississippi, to Little Rock. An old lady give me carfare, there, when I told her I was goin' home to my wife that I'd treated so bad. There's plenty Christians in Arkansaw. And they've pulled down the old Presbyterian church your mamma and I was married in."

"Yes; last year. Sadie, take Mr. Packer's bag up to the spare room. Stop cryin', Papa."

She spoke against her will. She could not let him sit on the floor sobbing any longer. His gleaming head afflicted her. She had a queer emotion. This seemed most unreal. The gray hall wavered like a flashing view in a film.

"The barn'd be a fitter place for me, daughter. I've been a——"

"That's all right, Papa. You better go up and lie down, and Sadie'll fetch you up some lunch."

His hand was warm and lax. Mrs. Egg fumbled with it for a moment and let it fall. He passed up the stairs, drooping his head. Mrs. Egg heard the cook's sympathy explode above and leaned on the wall and thought of Adam coming home Wednesday night. She had told him a thousand times that he mustn't gamble or mistreat women or chew tobacco "like your Grandfather Packer did." And here was Grandfather Packer, ready to welcome Adam home!

The farmhand strolled off, outside, taking the seed of this news. It would be in town directly.

"Oh, Dammy," she said, "and I wanted everything nice for you!"

In the still hall her one sob sounded like a shout. Mrs. Egg marched back to the dining room and drank a full glass of milk to calm herself.

"Says he can't eat nothin', Mis' Egg," the cook reported, "but he'd like a cup of tea. It's real pitiful. He's sayin' the Twenty-third Psalm to himself. Wasted to a shadder. Asked if Mr. Egg was as Christian an' forbearin' as you. Mebbe he could eat some buttered toast."

"Try and see, Sadie; and don't bother me. I got to think."

She thought steadily, eating cold rice with cream and apple jelly. Her memory of Packer was slim. He had spanked her for spilling ink on his diary. He had been a carpenter. His brothers were all dead. He had run off with a handsome Swedish servant girl in 1882, leaving her mother to sew for a living. What would the county say? Mrs. Egg writhed and recoiled from duty. Perhaps she would get used to the glittering bald head and the thin voice. It was all most unreal. Her mother had so seldom talked of the runaway that Mrs. Egg had forgotten him as possibly alive. And here he was! What did one do with a prodigal father? With a jolt she remembered that there would be roast veal for supper.

At four, while she was showing the Ashland dairyman the bull calf, child of Red Rover VII and Buttercup IV, Mrs. Egg saw her oldest daughter's motor sliding across the lane from the turnpike. It held all three of her female offspring. Mrs. Egg groaned, drawling commonplaces to her visitor, but he stayed a full hour, admiring the new milk shed and the cider press. When she waved him good-bye from the veranda she found her daughters in a stalwart group by the sitting-room fireplace, pink eyed and comfortably emotional. They wanted to kiss her. Mrs. Egg dropped into her particular mission chair and grunted, batting off embraces.

"I suppose it's all over town? It'd travel fast. Well, what d'you think of your grandpapa, girls?"

"Don't talk so loud, Mamma," one daughter urged.

Another said, "He's so tired he went off asleep while he was telling us how he nearly got hung for shooting a man in San Antonio."

Mrs. Egg reached for the glass urn full of chocolate wafers on the table and put one in her mouth. She remarked, "I

can see you've been having a swell time, girls. A sinner that repenteth——"

"Why, Mamma!"

"Listen," said Mrs. Egg; "if there's going to be any forgiving done around here, it's me that'll do it. You girls was raised with all the comforts of home and then some. You never helped anybody do plain sewin' at fifteen cents a hour nor had to borrow money to get a decent dress to be married in. This thing of hearin' how he shot folks and kept a saloon in Texas is good as a movie to you. It don't set so easy on me. I'm old and tough. And I'll thank you to keep your mouths shut. Here's Dammy comin' home Wednesday out of the Navy, and all this piled up on me. I don't want every lazyjake in the country pilin' in here to hear what a bad man he's been, and dirty the carpets up. Dammy likes things clean. I'm a better Christian than a lot of folks I can think of, but this looks to me like a good deal of a bread-and-butter repentance. Been devourin' his substance in Texas and come home to——"

"Oh, Mamma, your own papa!"

"That's as may be. My own mamma busted her eyesight and got heart trouble for fifteen mortal years until your papa married me and gave her a home for her old age, and never a whimper out of her, neither. She's where she can't tell me what she thinks of him and I dunno what to think. But I'll do my own thinkin' until Dammy and your papa gets back and tell me what they think. This is your papa's place—and Dammy's. It ain't a boardin' house for——"

"Oh, Mamma!"

"And it's time for my nap."

Susan, the oldest daughter, made a tremulous protest. "He's seventy-six years old, Mamma, and whatever he's done——"

"For a young woman that talked pretty loud of leavin' her husband when he came home kind of lit up from a club meetin'——" Mrs. Egg broke in. Susan collapsed and drew her gloves on hastily. Mrs. Egg ate another chocolate wafer and resumed: "This here's my business—and your papa's and Dammy's. I've got it in my head that that movie weekly picture they had of Buttercup Four with her price wrote out must have been shown in San Antonio.

And you'll recollect that your papa and me stood alongside her while that fresh cameraman took the picture. If I was needin' a meal and saw I'd got a well-off son-in-law——"

"Mamma," said Susan, "you're perfectly cynical."

Mrs. Egg pronounced, "I'm forty-five years of age," and got up.

The daughters withdrew. Mrs. Egg covered the chocolate urn with a click and went into the kitchen. Two elderly farmhands went out of the porch door as she entered.

Mrs. Egg told the cook: "Least said, soon'st mended, Sadie. Give me the new cream. I guess I might's well make some spice cookies. Be pretty busy Wednesday. Dammy likes 'em a little stale."

"Mis' Egg," said the cook, "if this was Dammy that'd kind of strayed off and come home sick in his old age——"

"Give me the cream," Mrs. Egg commanded, and was surprised by the fierceness of her own voice. "I don't need any help seein' my duty, thanks!"

At six o'clock her duty became highly involved. A friend telephoned from town that the current-events weekly at the moving-picture theatre showed Adam in the view of the dreadnoughts at Guantánamo.

"Get out," said Adam's mother. "You're jokin'! . . . Honest? Well, it's about time! What's he doin'? . . . Wrestlin'? My! Say, call up the theatre and tell Mr. Rubenstein to save me a box for the evenin' show."

"I hear your father's come home," the friend insinuated.

"Yes," Mrs. Egg drawled, "and ain't feelin' well and don't need comp'ny. Be obliged if you'd tell folks that. He's kind of sickly. So they've got Dammy in a picture. It's about time!" The tremor ran down her back. She said "Good-night, dearie," and rang off.

The old man was standing in the hall doorway, his head a vermilion ball in the crossed light of the red sunset.

"Feel better, Papa?"

"As good as I'm likely to feel in this world again. You look real like your mother settin' there, Myrtle." The whisper seemed likely to ripen as a sob.

Mrs. Egg answered, "Mamma had yellow hair and never weighed more'n a hundred and fifty pounds to the day of her death. What'd you like for supper?"

He walked slowly along the room, his knees sagging, twitching from end to end. She had forgotten how tall he was. His face constantly wrinkled. It was hard to see his eyes under their long lashes. Mrs. Egg felt the pity of all this in a cold way.

She said, when he paused: "That's Adam, there, on the mantelpiece, Papa. Six feet four and a half he is. It don't show in a picture."

"The Navy's rough kind of life, Myrtle. I hope he ain't picked up bad habits. The world's full of pitfalls."

"Sure," said Mrs. Egg, shearing the whisper. "Only Dammy ain't got any sense about cards. I tried to teach him pinochle, but he never could remember none of it, and the hired men always clean him out shakin' dice. He can't even beat his papa at checkers. And that's an awful thing to say of a bright boy!"

The old man stared at the photograph and his forehead smoothed for a breath. Then he sighed and drooped his chin.

"If I'd stayed by right principles when I was young——"

"D'you still keep a diary, Papa?"

"I did used to keep a diary, didn't I? I'd forgotten that. When you come to my age, Myrtle, you'll find yourself forgettin' easy. If I could remember any good things I ever did——"

The tears dripped from his jaw to the limp breast of his coat. Mrs. Egg felt that he must be horrible, naked, like a doll carved of coconut bark Adam had sent home from Havana. He was darker than Adam even. In the twilight the hollows of his face were sheer black. The room was gray. Mrs. Egg wished that the film would hurry and show something brightly lit.

The dreary whisper mourned, "Grain for the grim reaper's sickle, that's what I am. Tares mostly. When I'm gone you lay me alongside your mamma and——"

"Supper's ready, Mis' Egg," said the cook.

Supper was odious. He sat crumbling bits of toast into a bowl of hot milk and whispering feeble questions about dead folk or the business of the vast dairy farm. The girls had been too kind, he said.

"I couldn't help but feel that if they knew all about me——"

"They're nice sociable girls," Mrs. Egg panted, dizzy with dislike of her veal. She went on: "And they like a good cry, never havin' had nothin' to cry for."

His eyes opened wide in the lamplight, gray brilliance sparkled. Mrs. Egg stiffened in her chair, meeting the look.

He wailed, "I gave you plenty to cry for, daughter." The tears hurt her, of course.

"There's a picture of Dammy in the movies," she gasped. "I'm goin' in to see it. You better come. It'll cheer you, Papa."

She wanted to recall the offer too late. In the car she felt chilly. He sank into a corner of the tonneau like a thrown laprobe. Mrs. Egg talked loudly about Adam all the way to town and shouted directions to the driving farm-hand in order that the whisper might not start. The manager of the theatre had saved a box for her and came to usher her to its discomfort. But all her usual pleasure was gone. She nodded miserably over the silver-gilt rail at friends. She knew that people were craning from far seats. Her bulk and her shadow effaced the man beside her. He seemed to cower a little. At eight the show began, and Mrs. Egg felt darkness as a blessing, although the shimmer from the screen ran like phosphorus over the bald head, and a flash of white between two parts of the advertisement showed the dark wrinkles of his brow.

"Like the pictures, Papa?"

"I don't see well enough to take much pleasure in 'em, Myrtle."

A whirling globe announced the beginning of the weekly. Mrs. Egg forgot her burdens. She was going to see Adam. She took a peppermint from the bag in her hand and set her teeth in its softness, applauded a view of the President and the arrival of an ambassador in New York. Then the greenish letters declared: "The fleet leaves Guantánamo training ground," and her eyes hurt with staring. The familiar lines of anchored battleships appeared with a motion of men in white on the gray decks. The screen showed a race of boats which melted without warning to a mass of white uniforms packed about the raised square of a roped-in platform below guns and a turret clouded with men. Two

tanned giants in wrestling tights scrambled under the ropes. There was a flutter of caps.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Egg. "Oh!"

She stood up. The view enlarged. Adam was plain as possible. He grinned, too; straight from the screen at her. The audience murmured. Applause broke out, Adam jerked his black head to his opponent—and the view flicked off in some stupid business of admirals. Mrs. Egg sat down and sobbed.

"Was that Adam, daughter? The—the big feller with black hair?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Egg; "yes." She was hot with rage against the makers of pictures who'd taken him from her. It was a shame. She crammed four peppermints into her mouth and groaned about them, "As if people wouldn't rather look at some good wrestlin' than a lot of captains and stuff!"

"How long's the boy been in the Navy, Myrtle?"

"April 14, 1917."

The whisper restored her. Mrs. Egg yawned for an hour of nonsense about a millionaire and his wife who was far too thin. Her father did not speak, although he moved now and then. The show concluded. Mrs. Egg lumbered wearily out to her car in the dull street and vaguely listened to the whisper of old age. She couldn't pay attention. She was going home to write the film company at length. This abuse of Adam was intolerable. She told the driver so. The driver agreed.

He reported, "I was settin' next to Miss Webb."

"That's Dammy's girl, Papa. Go on, Sam. What did Edie say?"

"Well," said the driver, "she liked seein' the kid. She cried, anyhow."

Mrs. Egg was charmed by the girl's good sense. The moon looked like a quartered orange over the orchard.

She sighed, "Well, he'll be home Wednesday night, anyhow. Edie ain't old enough to get married yet. Hey, what's the house all lit up for? Sadie ought to know better."

She prepared a lecture for the cook. The motor shot up the drive into a babble and halted at the steps. Someone

immense rose from a chair and leaped down the space in one stride.

Adam said, "H'lo, Mamma," and opened the car door.

Mrs. Egg squealed. The giant lifted her out of her seat and carried her into the sitting room. The amazing muscles rose in the flat of his back. She thought his overshirt ripped. The room spun. Adam fanned her with his cap and grinned.

"Worst of radiograms," he observed; "the boys say Papa went on to meet me. Well, it'll give him a trip. Quit cryin', Mamma."

"Oh, Dammy, and there ain't nothin' fit to eat in the house!"

Adam grinned again. The farmhands dispersed at his nod. Mrs. Egg beat down her sobs with both hands and decried the radio service that could turn Sunday into Tuesday. Here was Adam, though, silently grinning, his hands available, willing to eat anything she had in the pantry. Mrs. Egg crowed her rapture in a dozen bursts.

The whispering voice crept into a pause with, "You'll be wantin' to talk to your boy, daughter. I'll go to bed, I guess."

"Dammy," said Mrs. Egg, "this is——"

Adam stopped rolling a cigarette and nodded to the shadow by the hall door. He said, "How you? The boys told me you'd got here," and licked the cigarette shut with a flash of his red tongue. He struck a match on the blue coating of one lean thigh and lit the cigarette, then stared at the shadow. Mrs. Egg hated the old man against reason as the tears slid down the dark face.

"Grain for the grim reaper's sickle, daughter. You'll be wantin' to talk to your boy. I guess I'll say good-night." He faded into the hall.

"Well, come, let's see what there is to eat, Mamma," said Adam, and pulled Mrs. Egg from her chair.

He sat on the low ice chest in the pantry and ate chocolate cake. Mrs. Egg uncorked pear cider and reached, panting, among apple-jelly glasses. Adam seldom spoke. She didn't expect talk from him. He was sufficient. He nodded and ate. The tanned surface of his throat dimpled when he swallowed things. His small nose wrinkled when he chewed.

Mrs. Egg chattered confusedly. Adam grinned when she patted his smooth hair and once said "Get out!" when she paused between two kisses to assure him he was handsome. He had his father's doubts on the point perhaps. He was not, she admitted, exactly beautiful. He was Adam, perfect and hard as an oak trunk under his blue clothes. He finished the chocolate cake and began to eat bread and apple jelly.

He ate six slices and drank a mug of pear cider, then crossed his legs and drawled, "Was a fellow on the *Nevada* they called Frisco Cooley?"

"What about him, Dammy?"

"Nothin'. He was as tall as me. Skinny, though. Used to imitate actors in shows. Got discharged in 1919."

"Was he a nice boy, Dammy?"

"No," said Adam, and reached for the pear-cider bottle. He fell into his usual calm and drank another mug of cider. Mrs. Egg talked of Edie Webb. Adam grinned and kept his black eyes on the pantry ceiling. The clock struck eleven. He said, "They called him Frisco Cooley 'cause he came from San Francisco. He could wrinkle his face up like a monkey. He worked in a gamblin' joint in San Francisco. That's him." Adam jerked a thumb at the ceiling.

"Dammy!"

"That's him," said Adam. "It took me a time to think of him, but that's him."

Mrs. Egg fell back against the ice chest and squeaked: "You mean you know this——"

"Hush up, Mamma!"

"But he walked part the way from San Antonio. He——"

"He ain't your father," said Adam, "so don't cry. Is there any maple sugar? The grub on the train was fierce."

Mrs. Egg brought him the tin case of maple sugar. Adam selected a chunk of the brown stuff and bit a lobe of it. He was silent. Mrs. Egg marvelled at him. His sisters had hinted that he wasn't clever. She stood in awe, although her legs ached. Adam finished the lump of maple sugar and rose. He leaned on the shelves with his narrow waist curved against them and studied a row of quince-preserve jars. His nose wrinkled.

He asked, "You been fumigatin'?"

"Fumigatin'! Why, Dammy, there ain't been a disease in the house since you had whoopin' cough."

"Sulphur," Adam drawled.

"Why, Dammy Egg! I never used sulphur for nothin' in my life!"

He took a jar of preserves and ripped off the paraffin wafer that covered the top. Then he set the jar aside and sat down on the floor. Mrs. Egg watched him unlace his shoes.

He commanded, "You sit still, Mamma. Be back in a minute."

"Dammy, don't you go near that heathen!"

"I ain't."

He swung across the kitchen floor in two strides and bumped his head on the top of the door. Mrs. Egg winced, but all her body seemed to move after the boy. Shiverings tossed her. She lifted her skirts and stepped after him. The veranda was empty. Adam had vanished, although the moon covered the dooryard with silver. The woman stared and shook. Then something slid down the nearest pillar and dropped like a black column to the grass. Adam came up the steps and shoved Mrs. Egg back to the pantry.

He spread some quince preserve on a slab of bread and stated, "He's sittin' up readin' a lot of old copybooks, kind of. Got oil all over his head. It's hair remover. Sulphur in it."

"How could you ever smell that far, Dammy?"

"I wonder what's in those books?" Adam pondered. He sat cross-legged on the ice chest and ate slowly for a time, then remarked, "You didn't put up these quinces, Mamma."

"No; they're Sadie's. Think of your noticin'!"

"You got to teach Edie cookin'," he said. "She can't cook fit for a Cuban. Lots of time, though. Now, Mamma, we can't let this goof stay here all night. I guess he's a thief. I ain't goin' to let the folks have a laugh on you. Didn't your father always keep a diary?"

"Think of your rememberin' that, Dammy! Yes, always."

"That's what Frisco's readin' up in. He's smart. Used to do im'tations of actors and cry like a hose pipe. Spotted that. Where's the strawb'ry jam?"

"Right here, Dammy. Dammy, suppose he killed Papa somewheres off and stole his diaries!"

"Well," said Adam, beginning strawberry jam, "I thought of that. Mebbe he did. I'd better find out. Y'oughtn't to kill folks even if they're no good for nothin'."

"I'll go down to the barn and wake some of the boys up," Mrs. Egg hissed.

"You won't neither, Mamma. This'd be a joke on you. I ain't goin' to have folks sayin' you took this guy for your father. Fewer knows it, the better. This is awful good jam." He grinned and pulled Mrs. Egg down beside him on the chest. She forgot to be frightened, watching the marvel eat. She must get larger jars for jam. He reflected: "You always get enough to eat on a boat, but it ain't satisfyin'. Frisco prob'ly uses walnut juice to paint his face with. It don't wash off. Don't talkin' make a person thirsty?"

"Wait till I get you some more cider, Dammy."

Adam thoughtfully drank more pear cider and made a cigarette. Wonderful ideas must be moving behind the blank brown of his forehead. His mother adored him and planned a recital of his acts to Egg, who had accused Adam of being slow witted.

She wanted to justify herself, and muttered: "I just felt he wasn't Papa all along. He was like one of those awful sorrowful persons in a movie."

"Sure," said Adam, patting her arm. "I wish Edie'd got as nice a complexion as you, Mamma."

"Mercy, Dammy!" his mother tittered and blushed.

Adam finished a third mug of cider and got up to examine the shelves. He scratched the rear of one calf with the other toe, and muscles cavorted in both legs as he reached for a jar of grapefruit marmalade. He peered through this at the lamp and put the jar back. Mrs. Egg felt hurt.

The paragon explained: "Too sour after strawb'ry, Mamma. I'd like some for breakfast, though. Back in a minute."

He trotted out through the kitchen and vanished on the veranda. She shivered, being alone.

Adam came back and nodded: "Light's out. Any key to that room?"

"No."

"I can always think better when I'm eatin'," he confessed, and lifted down the plate of spiced cookies, rejected them as too fresh, and pounced on a covered dish of apple sauce.

This he absorbed in stillness, wriggling his toes on the oilcloth. Mrs. Egg felt entirely comfortable and real. She could hear the cook snoring. Behind her the curtain of the pantry window fluttered. The cool breeze was pleasant on her neck. Adam licked the spoon and said, "Back in a minute, Mamma," as he started for the veranda door.

Mrs. Egg reposed on the ice chest thinking about Adam. He was like Egg, in that nothing fattened him. She puzzled over to-morrow's lunch. Baked ham and sweet potatoes, sugared; creamed asparagus; hot corn muffins. Dessert perplexed her. Were there any brandied peaches left? She feared not. They belonged on the upper shelf nearest the ice chest. Anxiety chewed her. Mrs. Egg climbed the lid by the aid of the window sill and reached up an arm to the shelf.

Adam said, "Here y'are, Mamma."

The pantry door shut. Mrs. Egg swung about. Adam stood behind a shape in blue pajamas, a hand locked on either of its elbows. He grinned at Mrs. Egg over the mummer's shoulder. As the woman panted sulphur entered her throat. The lamp threw a glare into the dark face, which seemed paler.

"Go on, Frisco," said Adam, about the skull, "tell Mamma about her father."

A sharp voice answered, "Let go my arms. You're killin' me!"

"Quit kiddin'," Adam growled. "Go on!"

"He ran a joint in San Francisco and gave me a job after I got out the Navy. Died last fall. I kind of nursed him. Told me to burn all these books—diaries. I read 'em. He called himself Peterson. Left all his money to a woman. She shut the joint. I looked some like him so I took a chance. Leggo my arms, Egg!"

"He'd ought to go to jail, Dammy," said Mrs. Egg. "It's just awful! I bet the police are lookin' for him right now."

"Mamma, if we put him in jail this'll be all over the county and you'll never hear the end of it."

She stared at the ape with loathing. There was a star tattooed on one of his naked insteps. He looked no longer frail, but wiry and snakelike. The pallor behind his dark tan showed the triangles of black stain in his cheeks and eye sockets.

"He's too smart to leave loose, Dammy."

"It'll be an awful joke on you, Mamma."

"I can't help it, Dammy. He——"

The prisoned figure toppled back against Adam's breast and the mouth opened hideously. The lean legs bent.

"You squeezed him too tight, Dammy. He's fainted. Lay him down."

Adam let the figure slide to the floor. It rose in a whirl of blue linen. Mrs. Egg rocked on the chest.

The man thrust something at Adam's middle and said in a rasp, "Get your arms up!"

Adam's face turned purple beyond the gleaming skull. His hands rose a little and his fingers crisped. He drawled,

"Fact. I ought have looked under your duds, you——"

"Stick 'em up!" said the man.

Mrs. Egg saw Adam's arms tremble. His lower lip drew down. He wasn't going to put his arms up. The man would kill him. She could not breathe. She fell forward from the ice chest and knew nothing.

She roused with a sense of great cold and was sitting against the shelves. Adam stopped rubbing her face with a lump of ice and grinned at her.

He cried, "By gee, you did that quick, Mamma! Knocked the wind clear out of him."

"Where is he, Dammy?"

"Dunno. Took his gun and let him get dressed. He's gone. Say, that was slick!"

Mrs. Egg blushed and asked for a drink. Adam dropped the ice into a mug of pear cider and squatted beside her with a shabby notebook.

"Here's somethin' for October 10, 1919." He read: "Talked to a man from Ilium to-day in Palace Bar. Myrtle married to John Egg. Four children. Egg worth a wad. Dairy and cider business. Going to build new Presbyterian church.' That's it, Mamma. He doped it all out from the diary."

"The dirty dog!" said Mrs. Egg. She ached terribly and put her head on Adam's shoulder.

"I'll put all the diaries up in the attic. Kind of good readin.' Say, it's after two. You better go to bed."

In her dreams Mrs. Egg beheld a bronze manacing skeleton

beside her pillow. It whispered and rattled. She woke, gulping, in bright sunlight, and the rattle changed to the noise of a motor halting on the drive. She gave yesterday a fleet review, rubbing her blackened elbows, but felt charitable toward Frisco Cooley by connotation; she had once sat down on a collie pup. But her bedroom clock struck ten times. Mrs. Egg groaned and rolled out of bed, reaching for a wrapper. What had the cook given Adam for breakfast? She charged along the upper hall into a smell of coffee, and heard Adam speaking below. His sisters made some feeble united interjection.

The hero said sharply: "Of course he was a fake! Mamma knew he was, all along, but she didn't want to let on she did in front of folks. That ain't dignified. She just flattened him out and he went away quiet. You girls always talk like Mamma hadn't as much sense as you. She's kind of used up this morning. Wait till I give her her breakfast, and I'll come talk to you."

A tray jingled.

Mrs. Egg retreated into her bedroom, awed. Adam carried in her breakfast and shut the door with a foot.

He complained: "Went in to breakfast at Edie's. Of course she's only sixteen, but I could make better biscuits myself. Lay down, Mamma."

He began to butter slices of toast, in silence, expertly. Mrs. Egg drank her coffee in rapture that rose toward ecstasy as Adam made himself a sandwich of toast and marmalade and sat down at her feet to consume it.

THE VICTIM OF HIS VISION

By GERALD CHITTENDEN

From *Scribner's*

THERE'S no doubt about it," said the hardware drummer with the pock-pitted cheeks. He seemed glad that there was no doubt—smacked his lips over it and went on. "Obeah—that's black magic; and voodoo—that's snake-worship. The island is rotten with 'em—rotten with 'em."

He looked sidelong over his empty glass at the Reverend Arthur Simpson. Many human things were foreign to the clergyman: he was uneasy about being in the *Arequipa's* smoke-room at all, for instance, and especially uneasy about sitting there with the drummer.

"But—human sacrifice!" he protested. "You spoke of human sacrifice."

"And cannibalism. *La chèvre sans cornes*—the goat without horns—that means an unblemished child less than three years old. It's frequently done. They string it up by its heels, cut its throat, and drink the blood. Then they eat it. Regular ceremony—the *mamaloï* officiates."

"Who officiates?"

"The *mamaloï*—the priestess."

Simpson jerked himself out of his chair and went on deck. Occasionally his imagination worked loose from control and tormented him as it was doing now. There was a grizzly vividness in the drummer's description. It was well toward morning before Simpson grasped again his usual certainty of purpose and grew able to thank God that he had been born into a very wicked world. There was much for a missionary to do in Hayti—he saw that before the night grew thin, and was glad.

Between dawn and daylight the land leaped out of the sea, all clear blues and purples, incomparably fresh and incom-

parably wistful in that one golden hour of the tropic day before the sun has risen very high—the disembodied spirit of an island. It lay, vague as hope at first, in a jewel-tinted sea; the ship steamed toward it as through the mists of creation's third morning, and all good things seemed possible. Thus had Simpson, reared in an unfriendly land, imagined it, for beneath the dour Puritanism that had lapped him in its armour there still stirred the power of wonder and surprise that has so often through the ages changed Puritans to poets. That glimpse of Hayti would remain with him, he thought, yet within the hour he was striving desperately to hold it. For soon the ruffle of the breeze died from off the sea, and it became gray glass through which the anchor sank almost without a sound and was lost.

"Sweet place, isn't it, Mr. Simpson?" said Bunsen, the purser, pausing on his way to the gangway.

"So that," Simpson rejoined slowly—and because it was a port of his desire his voice shook on the words—"is Port au Prince!"

"That," Bunsen spat into the sea, "is Port au Prince."

He moved away. A dirty little launch full of uniforms was coming alongside. Until the yellow flag—a polite symbol in that port—should be hauled down Simpson would be left alone. The uniforms had climbed to the deck and were chattering in a bastard patois behind him; now and then the smell of the town struck across the smells of the sea and the bush like the flick of a snake's tail. Simpson covered his eyes for a moment, and immediately the vision of the island as he had seen it at dawn swam in his mind. But he could not keep his eyes forever shut—there was the necessity of living and of doing his work in the world to be remembered always. He removed his hand. A bumboat was made fast below the well of the deck, and a boy with an obscenely twisted body and a twisted black face was selling pineapples to the sailors. Simpson watched him for a while, and because his education had been far too closely specialized he quoted the inevitable:

"Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

The verse uplifted him unreasonably. He went below to pack his baggage. He said good-bye to the officers, painfully

conscious that they were grinning behind his back, and was rowed ashore by the deformed boy.

The boy said something in abominable French. He repeated it—Simpson guessed at its meaning.

"I shall stay a long time," he answered in the same language. "I am a minister of the gospel—a missionary."

The cripple, bent revoltingly over his oar, suddenly broke out into laughter, soulless, without meaning. Simpson, stung sharply in his stiff-necked pride, sprang up and took one step forward, his fist raised. The boy dropped the oars and writhed to starboard, his neck askew at an eldritch angle, his eyes glaring upward. But he did not raise a hand to ward off the blow that he feared, and that was more uncanny still.

The blow never fell. Simpson's hand unclinked and shame reddened in his face.

"Give me the oars," he said. "*Pauvre garçon*—did you think that I would strike you?"

The boy surrendered the oars and sidled aft like a crab, his eyes still rolling at his passenger.

"Why should the maimed row the sound?" said Simpson.

He rowed awkwardly. The boy watched him for a moment, then grinned uncertainly; presently he lolled back in the stern-sheets, personating dignity. A white man was doing his work—it was splendid, as it should be, and comic in the extreme. He threw back his head and cackled at the hot sky.

"Stop that!" Simpson, his nerves raw, spoke in English, but the laughter jarred to a blunt end. The boy huddled farther away from him, watching him with unwinking eyes which showed white all around the pupil. Simpson, labouring with the clumsy cars, tried to forget him. It was hot—hotter than it had seemed at first; sweat ran into his eyes and he grew a little dizzy. The quarantine launch with its load of uniforms, among which the purser's white was conspicuous, passed, giving them its wake; there was no sound from it, only a blaze of teeth and eyeballs. Simpson glanced over his shoulder at it. The purser was standing in the stern, clear of the awning, his head quizzically on one side and a cigarette in his fingers.

The rowboat came abreast of a worm-eaten jetty.

"*Ici*," said the cripple.

Simpson, inexpert, bumped into it bow on, and sculled the

stern around. The cripple, hideously agile, scrambled out and held the boat; Simpson gathered up his bag and followed.

A Roman priest, black as the top of a stove, strode down the jetty toward them.

"You—you!" he shouted to the cripple when he was yet ten strides away. His voice rose as he approached. "You let the m'sieu' row you ashore! You——" A square, heavy boot shot out from beneath his cassock into the boy's stomach. "*Cochon!*" said the priest, turning to Simpson. His manner became suddenly suave, grandiose. "These swine!" he said. "One keeps them in their place. I am Father Antoine. And you?"

"Simpson—Arthur Simpson." He said his own name slowly as thought there was magic in it, magic that would keep him in touch with his beginnings.

"Simpson?" The priest gave it the French sound; suspicion struggled for expression on his black mask; his eyes took in the high-cut waistcoat, the unmistakable clerical look. "You were sent?"

"By the board of foreign missions."

"I do not know it. Not by the archbishop?"

"There is no archbishop in my Church."

"In your Church?" Father Antoine's eyes sprang wide—wide as they had been when he kicked the boatman. "In your Church? You are not of the true faith, then?"

Pride of race, unchastened because he had not till that moment been conscious that it existed in him, swelled in Simpson.

"Are you?" he asked.

Father Antoine stared at him, not as an angry white man stares, but with head thrown back and mouth partly open, in the manner of his race. Then, with the unreasoned impetuosity of a charging bull, he turned and flung shoreward down the pier. The cripple, groaning still, crawled to Simpson's feet and sat there.

"*Pauvre garçon!*" repeated Simpson dully. "*Pauvre garçon!*"

Suddenly the boy stopped groaning, swung Simpson's kit-bag on his shoulder, and sidled up the pier. His right leg bent outward at the knee, and his left inward; his head, inclined away from his burden, seemed curiously detached from

his body; his gait was a halting sort of shuffle; yet he got along with unexpected speed. Simpson, still dazed, followed him into the Grand Rue—a street of smells and piled filth, where gorged buzzards, reeking of the tomb, flapped upward under his nose from the garbage and offal of their feast. Simpson paused for a moment at the market-stalls, where negroes of all shades looked out at him in a silence that seemed devoid of curiosity. The cripple beckoned him and he hurried on. On the steps of the cathedral he saw Father Antoine, but, although the priest must have seen him, he gave no sign as he passed. He kept to what shade there was. Presently his guide turned down a narrow alley, opened a dilapidated picket gate, and stood waiting.

"Maman !" he called. *"Ohé ! Maman !"*

Simpson, his curiosity faintly stirring, accepted the invitation of the open gate, and stepped into an untidy yard, where three or four pigs and a dozen chickens rooted and scratched among the bayonets of yucca that clustered without regularity on both sides of the path. The house had some pretensions; there were two stories, and, although the blue and red paint had mostly flaked away, the boarding looked sound. In the yard there was less fetor than there had been outside.

"Maman !" called the boy again.

A pot-lid clashed inside the house, and a tall negress, dressed in a blue-striped Mother Hubbard, came to the door. She stared at Simpson and at the boy.

"Qui ?" was all she said.

The boy sidled nearer her and dropped the bag on the threshold.

"Qui ?" she said again.

Simpson waited in silence. His affairs had got beyond him somehow, and he seemed to himself but the tool of circumstance. It did occur to him, though dimly, that he was being introduced to native life rather quickly.

The cripple, squatting with his back against the bag, launched into a stream of patois, of which Simpson could not understand a word. Gestures explained somewhat; he was reenacting the scenes of the last half hour. When he had finished, the negress, not so hostile as she had been but by no means friendly, turned to Simpson and looked at him a long

time without speaking. He had all he could do not to fidget under her gaze; finally, she stood aside from the door and said, without enthusiasm:

"B'en venu. C'est vo' masson."

Simpson entered automatically. The kitchen, with its hard earth floor and the sunlight drifting in through the bamboo sides, was not unclean, and a savoury smell came from the stew-pot on the ramshackle stove. In one of the bars of sunlight a mango-coloured child of two years or so was playing with his toes—he was surprisingly clean and perfectly formed.

"Aha, mon petit!" exclaimed Simpson. He loved children. "He is handsome," he added, addressing the woman.

"Mine!" She turned the baby gently with her foot; he caught at the hem of her dress, laughing. But she did not laugh. "Neither spot nor blemish," she said, and then: "He is not yet three years old."

Simpson shuddered, recalling the pock-marked drummer on the *Arequipa*. That was momentary—a coincidence, he told himself. The woman was looking down at the child, her eyes softer than they had been, and the child was lying on its back and playing with her Mother Hubbard.

The woman lifted the lid from the pot and peered into it through the sun-shot steam.

"It is ready," she said. She lifted it from the stove and set it on the earthen floor. The cripple placed a handful of knives and spoons on the table and three tin plates; he thrust a long fork and a long spoon into the pot and stood aside.

"Seat yourself," said the woman, without looking at Simpson, "and eat."

She explored the pot with the fork, and stabbed it firmly—there was a suggestion of ruthlessness about her action that made Simpson shudder again—into a slab of meat, which she dropped on a plate, using a callous thumb to disengage it from the tines. She covered it with gravy and began to eat without further ceremony. The cripple followed her example, slobbering the gravy noisily; some of it ran down his chin. Neither of them paid any attention to Simpson.

He took the remaining plate from the table and stood irresolute with it in his hand. He was hungry, but his essential Puritan fastidiousness, combined with that pride of race which he knew to be un-Christian, rendered him reluctant

to dip into the common pot or to eat on equal terms with these people. Besides, the sun and his amazing introduction to the island had given him a raging headache: he could not think clearly nor rid himself of the sinister suggestion of the town, of the house, of its three occupants in particular.

The child touched a finger to the hot lip of the pot, burned itself, and began to cry.

"*Taise*," said the woman. Her voice was low but curt, and she did not raise her eyes from her plate. The child, its finger in its mouth, stopped crying at once.

Simpson shook himself; his normal point of view was beginning to assert itself. He must not—must not hold himself superior to the people he expected to convert; nothing, he insisted to himself, was to be gained, and much might be lost by a refusal to meet the people "on their own ground." Chance—he did not call it chance—had favoured him incredibly thus far, and if he failed to follow the guidance that had been vouchsafed him he would prove himself but an unworthy vessel. He took up the long fork—it chattered against the pot as he seized it—and, overcoming a momentary and inexplicable nausea, impaled the first piece of meat that rolled to the surface. There were yams also and a sort of dumpling made of manioc. When he had filled his plate he rose and turned suddenly; the woman and the cripple had stopped eating and were watching him. They did not take their eyes away at once but gave him stare for stare. He sat down; without a word they began to eat once again.

The stew was good, and once he had begun Simpson ate heartily of it. The tacit devilry fell away from his surroundings as his hunger grew less, and his companions became no more than a middle-aged negress in a turban, a black boy pitifully deformed, and a beautiful child. He looked at his watch—he had not thought of the time for hours—and found that it was a little after noon. It was time that he bestirred himself and found lodgings.

"Is there a hotel?" he asked cheerfully. He had noticed that the islanders understood legitimate French, though they could not speak it.

"There is one," said the woman. She pushed away her plate and became suddenly dourly communicative. "But I doubt if the *propriétaire* would find room for m'sieu'."

"Has he so many guests, then?"

"But no. M'sieu' has forgotten the priest."

"The priest? What has he to do with it?"

"My son tells me that m'sieu' offended him, and the *propriétaire* is a good Catholic. He will close his house to you." She shaved a splinter to a point with a table knife and picked her teeth with it, both elbows on the table and her eyes on Simpson. "There is nowhere else to stay," she said. "Unless—here."

"I should prefer that," said Simpson—quickly, for reluctance and distrust were rising in him again. "But have you a room?"

She jerked a thumb over her shoulder at a door behind her.

"There," she said. Simpson waited for her to move, saw that she had no intention of doing so, and opened the door himself.

The room was fairly large, with two windows screened but unglazed; a canvas cot stood in one corner, a packing-box table and a decrepit chair in another. Like the kitchen it was surprisingly clean. He returned to his hostess, who showed no anxiety about his intentions.

"How much by the week?" he asked.

"Eight *gourdes*."

"And you will feed me for how much?"

"Fifteen *gourdes*."

"I will take it." He forced himself to decision again; had he hesitated he knew he would have gone elsewhere. The price also—less than four dollars gold—attracted him, and he could doubtless buy some furniture in the town. Moreover, experienced missionaries who had talked before the board had always emphasized the value of living among the natives.

"*B'en*," said the negress. She rose and emptied the remains from her plate into a tin pail, sponging the plate with a piece of bread.

"I have a trunk on the steamer," said Simpson. "The boy—can he——"

"He will go with you," the negress interrupted.

The cripple slid from his chair, scraped his plate and Simpson's, put on his battered straw hat, and shambled into the yard. Simpson followed.

He turned at the gate and looked back. The child had

toddled to the door and was standing there, holding on to the door-post. Inside, the shadow of the woman flickered across the close bars of bamboo.

II

BUNSEN was standing on the jetty when they reached it, talking excitedly with a tall bowed man of fifty or so whose complexion showed the stippled pallor of long residence in the tropics.

"Here he is now!" Bunsen exclaimed as Simpson approached. "I was just getting anxious about you. Stopped at the hotel—you hadn't been there, they said. Port au Prince is a bad place to get lost in. Oh—this gentleman is our consul. Mr. Witherbee—Mr. Simpson."

Simpson shook hands. Witherbee's face was just a pair of dull eyes behind a ragged moustache, but there was unusual vigour in his grip.

"I'll see a lot of you, if you stay long," he said. He looked at Simpson more closely. "At least, I hope so. But where have you been? I was getting as anxious as Mr. Bunsen—afraid you'd been sacrificed to the snake or something."

Simpson raised a clerical hand, protesting. His amazing morning swept before his mind like a moving-picture film; there were so many things he could not explain even to himself, much less to these two Gentiles.

"I found lodgings," he said.

"Lodgings?" Witherbee and Bunsen chorused the word. "Where, for heaven's sake?"

"I don't know the name of the street," Simpson admitted. "I don't even know the name of my hostess. That"—indicating the cripple—"is her son."

"Good God!" Witherbee exclaimed. "Madame Picard! The *mamaloi*!"

"The—the what?" But Simpson had heard well enough.

"The *mamaloi*—the *mamaloi*—high priestess of voodoo."

"Her house is fairly clean," Simpson said. He was hardly aware of his own inconsequence. It was his instinct to defend any one who was attacked on moral grounds, whether they deserved the attack or not.

"Ye-es," Witherbee drawled. "I dare say it is. It's her

company that's unsavoury. Especially for a parson. Eh? What's the matter now?"

Simpson had flared up at his last words. His mouth set and his eyes burned suddenly. Bunsen, watching him coolly, wondered that he could kindle so; until that moment he had seemed but half alive. When he spoke his words came hurriedly—were almost unintelligible; yet there was some quality in his voice that compelled attention, affecting the senses more than the mind.

"Unsavoury company? That's best for a parson. 'I come not to bring the righteous but sinners to repentance.' And who are you to brand the woman as common or unclean? If she is a heathen priestess, yet she worships a god of some sort. Do you?" He stopped suddenly; the humility which men hated in him again blanketed his fanaticism. "It is my task to give her a better god—the only true God—Christ."

Bunsen, his legs wide apart, kept his eyes on the sea, for he did not want to let Simpson see him smiling, and he was smiling. Witherbee, who had no emotions of any sort, pulled his moustache farther down and looked at the clergyman as though he were under glass—a curiosity.

"So you're going to convert the whole island?" he said.

"I hope to make a beginning in the Lord's vineyard."

"Humph! The devil's game-preserve, you mean," Bunsen suddenly broke in.

"The devil's game-preserve, then!" Simpson was defiant.

"The ship calls here every other Saturday," was all Bunsen said to that. "You may need to know. I'll send your trunk ashore."

He stepped into the cripple's boat and started for the ship. Witherbee did not speak; Simpson, still raging, left him, strode to the end of the pier, and stood there, leaning on a pile.

His gust of emotion had left him; a not unfamiliar feeling of exaltation had taken its place. It is often so with the extreme Puritan type; control relaxed for however brief a moment sends their slow blood whirling, and leaves them light-headed as those who breathe thin air. From boyhood Simpson had been practised in control, until repression had become a prime tenet of his faith. The cheerful and generally innocent excursions of other men assumed in his mind the proportions of crime, of sin against the stern disciplining of

the soul which he conceived to be the goal of life. Probably he had never in all his days been so shocked as once when a young pagan had scorned certain views of his, saying: "There's more education—soul education, if you will have it—in five minutes of sheer joy than in a century of sorrow." It was an appalling statement, that—more appalling because he had tried to contradict it and had been unable to do so. He himself had been too eager to find his work in life—his pre-ordained work—ever to discover the deep truths that light-heartedness only can reveal; even when he heard his call to foreign missions—to Hayti, in particular—he felt no such felicity as a man should feel who has climbed to his place in the scheme of things. His was rather the sombre fury of the Covenanters—an intense conviction that his way was the only way of grace—a conviction that transcended reason and took flight into the realm of overmastering emotion—the only overmastering emotion, by the way, that he had ever experienced.

His choice, therefore, was in itself a loss of control and a dangerous one, for nothing is more perilous to sanity than the certainty that most other people in the world are wrong. Such conviction leads to a Jesuitical contempt of means; in cases where the Puritan shell has grown to be impregnable from the outside it sets up an internal ferment which sometimes bursts shell and man and all into disastrous fragments. Until old age kills them, the passions and emotions never die in man; suppress them how we will, we can never ignore them; they rise again to mock us when we think we are done with them forever. And the man of Simpson's type suffers from them most of all, for he dams against them all normal channels of expression.

Simpson, standing at the pier-end, was suffering from them now. His exaltation—a thing of a moment, as his fervour had been—had gone out of him, leaving him limp, uncertain of his own powers, of his own calling, even—the prey to the discouragement that precedes action, which is the deepest discouragement of all. Except for himself and Witherbee the pier was deserted; behind him the filthy town slept in its filth. Four buzzards wheeled above it, gorged and slow; the harbour lay before him like a green mirror, so still that the ship was reflected in it down to the last rope-yarn. Over all, the sun, colourless and furnace-hot, burned in a sky of steel. There

was insolence in the scorched slopes that shouldered up from the bay, a threatening permanence in the saw-edged sky-line. The indifference of it all, its rock-ribbed impenetrability to human influence, laid a crushing weight on Simpson's soul, so that he almost sank to his knees in sheer oppression of spirit.

"Do you know much about Hayti?" asked Witherbee, coming up behind him.

"As much as I could learn from books." Simpson wanted to be angry at the consul—why he could not tell—but Witherbee's voice was so carefully courteous that he yielded perforce to its persuasion and swung around, facing him. Suddenly, because he was measuring himself against man and not against Nature, his weakness left him, and confidence in himself and his mission flooded back upon him. "As much as I could get from books." He paused. "You have lived here long?"

"Long enough," Witherbee answered. "Five years."

"You know the natives, then?"

"Can't help knowing them. There are quite a lot of them, you see, and there's almost no one else. Do you know negroes at all?"

"Very little."

"You'd better study them a bit before you—before you do anything you have it in mind to do—the Haytian negro in particular. They're not like white men, you know."

"Like children, you mean?"

"Like some children. I'd hate to have them for nephews and nieces."

"Why?"

"We-ell"—Witherbee, looking sidelong at Simpson, bit off the end of a cigar—"a number of reasons. They're superstitious, treacherous, savage, cruel, and—worst of all—emotional. They've gone back. They've been going back for a hundred years. The West Coast—I've been there—is not so bad as Hayti. It's never been anything else than what it is now, you see, and if it moves at all it must move forward. There's nothing awful about savagery when people have never known anything else. Hayti has. You know what the island used to be before Desalines."

"I've read. But just what do you mean by West Coast savagery—here?"

"Snake-worship. Voodoo." Witherbee lit the cigar. "Human sacrifice."

"And the Roman Church does nothing!" There was exultation in Simpson's voice. His distrust of the Roman Church had been aggravated by his encounter with the black priest that morning.

"The Roman Church does what it can. It's been unfortunate in its instruments. Especially unfortunate now."

"Father Antoine?"

"Father Antoine. You met him?"

"This morning. A brute, and nothing more."

"Just that." Witherbee let a mouthful of smoke drift into the motionless air. "It's curious," he said.

"What is?"

"Father Antoine will make it unpleasant for you. He may try to have you knifed, or something."

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. Human life is worth nothing here. No wonder—it's not really worth living. But you're safe enough, and that's the curious thing."

"Why am I safe?"

"Because your landlady is who she is." Witherbee glanced over his shoulder, and, although they were the only people on the pier, from force of habit he dropped his voice. "The *mamaloï* has more power than the Church." He straightened and looked out toward the ship. "Here's her idiot with your trunk. My office is the first house on the left after you leave the pier. Don't forget that."

He turned quickly and was gone before the cripple's boat had reached the landing.

III

THE town, just stirring out of its siesta as Simpson followed the cripple through the streets, somehow reassured him. Men like Bunsen and Witherbee, who smiled at his opinions and remained cold to his rhapsodies, always oppressed him with a sense of ineffectuality. He knew them of old—knew them superficially, of course, for, since he was incapable of talking impersonally about religion, he had never had the chance to listen to the cool and yet often strangely mystical

opinions which such men hold about it. He knew, in a dim sort of way, that men not clergymen sometimes speculated about religious matters, seeking light from each other in long, fragmentary conversations. He knew that much, and disapproved of it—almost resented it. It seemed to him wrong to discuss God without becoming angry, and very wrong for laymen to discuss God at all. When circumstances trapped him into talk with them about things divine, he felt baffled by their silences and their reserves, seemed to himself to be scrabbling for entrance to their souls through some sort of a slippery, impenetrable casing; he never tried to enter through their minds, where the door stood always open. The trouble was that he wanted to teach and be listened to; wherefore he was subtly more at home among the ignorant and in such streets as he was now traversing than with educated men. He had been born a few decades too late; here in Hayti he had stepped back a century or so into the age of credulity. Credulity, he believed, was a good thing, almost a divine thing, if it were properly used; he did not carry his processes far enough to realize that credulity could never become fixed—that it was always open to conviction. A receptive and not an inquiring mind seemed to him the prerequisite for a convert. And black people, he had heard, were peculiarly receptive.

The question was, then, where and how to start his work. Hayti differed from most mission fields, for, so far as he knew, no one had ever worked in it before him. The first step was to cultivate the intimacy of the people, and that he found difficult in the extreme. He had one obvious channel of approach to them; when buying necessary things for his room, he could enter into conversation with the shopkeepers and the market-women, but this he found it difficult to do. They did not want to talk to him, even seemed reluctant to sell him anything; and when he left their shops or stalls, did not answer his "Au revoir." He wondered how much the priest had to do with their attitude. They had little also that he wanted—he shopped for a week before he found a gaudy pitcher and basin and a strip of matting for his floor. Chairs, bureaus, bookcases, and tables did not exist. He said as much to Madame Picard, and gathered from her growled response that he must find a

carpenter. The cripple, his constant companion in his first days on the island, took him to one—a gray old negro who wore on a shoe-string about his neck a pouch which Simpson thought at first to be a scapular, and whom age and his profession had made approachable. He was garrulous even; he ceased working when at length he understood what Simpson wanted, sat in his doorway with his head in the sun and his feet in the shade, and lit a pipe made out of a tiny cocoanut. Yes—he could build chairs, tables, anything m'sieu' wanted. There was wood also—black palm for drawer-knobs and cedar and mahogany and rosewood, but especially mahogany. An excellent wood, pleasant to work in and suave to the touch. Did they use it in the United States, he wondered?

"A great deal," answered Simpson. "And the San Domingo wood is the best, I believe."

"San Domingo—but yes," the carpenter said; "the Haytian also—that is excellent. Look!"

He led Simpson to the yard at the rear of his house and showed him half a dozen boards, their grain showing where the broad axe had hewed them smooth. Was it not a beautiful wood? And what furniture did m'sieu' desire?

Simpson had some little skill with his pencil—a real love for drawing was one of the instincts which his austere obsessions had crushed out of him. He revolved several styles in his mind, decided at length on the simplest, and drew his designs on a ragged scrap of wrapping paper, while the carpenter, leaning down from his chair by the door, watched him, smoking, and now and then fingering the leather pouch about his neck. Simpson, looking up occasionally to see that his sketch was understood, could not keep his eyes away from the pouch—whatever it was, it was not a scapular. He did not ask about it, though he wanted to; curiosity, he had heard, should be repressed when one is dealing with barbarians. But he knew that that was not his real reason for not asking.

"But it is easy," said the carpenter, picking up the paper and examining it. "And the seats of the chairs shall be of white hide, is it not?"

Simpson assented. He did not leave the shop at once, but remained seated on the threshold, following his usual policy of picking up acquaintances where he could.

"M'sieu' is a priest?" the old man asked, squinting at

him as he filled the cocoanut pipe again and thrust it between his ragged yellow teeth.

"Not a priest. A minister of the gospel."

"*Quoi?*" said the carpenter.

Simpson saw that he must explain. It was difficult. He had on the one hand to avoid suggesting that the Roman Church was insufficient—that denunciation he intended to arrive at when he had gained firmer ground with the people—and on the other to refrain from hinting that Haytian civilization stood in crying need of uplift. That also could come later. He wallowed a little in his explanation, and then put the whole matter on a personal basis.

"I think I have a message—something new to say to you about Christ. But I have been here a week now and have found none to listen to me."

"Something new?" the carpenter rejoined. "But that is easy if it is something new. In Hayti we like new things."

"No one will listen to me," Simpson repeated.

The carpenter reflected for a moment, or seemed to be doing so.

"Many men come here about sunset," he said. "We sit and drink a little rum before dark; it is good against the fever."

"I will come also," said Simpson, rising. "It is every evening?"

"Every evening." The carpenter's right hand rose to the pouch which was not a scapular and he caressed it.

"Au revoir," said Simpson suddenly.

"*Voir*," the carpenter replied, still immobile in his chair by the door.

Up to now a walk through the streets had been a nightmare to Simpson, for the squalor of them excited to protest every New England nerve in his body, and the evident hostility of the people constantly threatened his success with them. He had felt very small and lonely, like a man who has undertaken to combat a natural force; he did not like to feel small and lonely, and he did not want to believe in natural forces. Chosen vessel as he believed himself to be, thus far the island had successfully defied him, and he had feared more than once that it would do so to the end. He had compelled himself to frequent the markets, honing always

that he would find in them the key to the door that ~~was~~ closed against him; he had not found it, and, although he recognized that three weeks was but a fractional moment of eternity, and comforted himself by quoting things about the "mills of God," he could not approach satisfaction with what he had accomplished so far.

His interview with the carpenter had changed all that, and on his way home he trod the Grand Rue more lightly than he had ever done. Even the cathedral, even the company of half-starved conscripts that straggled past him in the tail of three generals, dismayed him no longer, for the cathedral was but the symbol of a frozen Christianity which he need no longer fear, and the conscripts were his people—his—or soon would be. All that he had wanted was a start; he had it now, though he deplored the rum which would be drunk at his first meeting with the natives. One must begin where one could.

Witherbee, sitting in the window of the consulate, called twice before Simpson heard him.

"You look pretty cheerful," he said. "Things going well?"

"They've just begun to, I think—I think I've found the way to reach these people."

"Ah?" The monosyllable was incredulous though polite. "How's that?"

"I've just been ordering some furniture from a carpenter," Simpson answered. It was the first time since the day of his arrival that he had seen Witherbee to speak to, and he found it a relief to speak in his own language and without calculating the result of his words.

"A carpenter? Vieux Michaud, I suppose?"

"That's his name. You know him?"

"Very well." The consul tipped back his chair and tapped his lips with a pencil. "Very well. He's a clever workman. He'll follow any design you give him, and the woods, of course, are excellent."

"Yes. He showed me some. But he's more than a carpenter to me. He's more—receptive—than most of the natives, and it seems that his shop is a gathering place—a centre. He asked me to come in the evenings."

"And drink rum?" Witherbee could not resist that.

"Ye-es. He said they drank rum. I sha'n't do that, of course, but one must begin where one can."

"I suppose so," Witherbee answered slowly. The office was darkened to just above reading-light, and the consul's face was in the shadow. Evidently he had more to say, but he allowed a long silence to intervene before he went on. Simpson, imaging wholesale conversions, sat quietly; he was hardly aware of his surroundings.

"Don't misunderstand what I'm going to say," the consul began at length. Simpson straightened, on his guard at once. "It may be of use to you—in your work," he added quickly. "It's this. Somehow—by chance perhaps, though I don't think so—you've fallen into strange company—stranger than any white man I've ever known."

"I am not afraid of voodoo," said Simpson rather scornfully.

"It would be better if you were a little afraid of it. I am—and I know what I'm talking about. Look what's happened to you. There's the Picard woman—she's the one who had President Simon Sam under her thumb. Did you know he carried the symbols of voodoo next his heart? And now Michaud, who's her right hand and has been for years. Looks like deep water to me."

"I must not fear for my own body."

"That's not what I mean exactly, though I wish you were a little more afraid for it. It might save me trouble—possibly save our government trouble—in the end. But the consequences of letting voodoo acquire any more power than it has may be far-reaching."

"I am not here to give it more power." Simpson, thoroughly angry, rose to go. "It is my business to defeat it—to root it out."

"Godspeed to you in that"—Witherbee's voice was ironical. "But remember what I tell you. The Picard woman is subtle, and Michaud is subtle." Simpson had crossed the threshold, and only half heard the consul's next remark. "Voodoo is more subtle than both of them together. Look out for it."

Witherbee's warning did no more than make Simpson angry; he attributed it to wrong motives—to jealousy perhaps, to hostility certainly, and neither jealousy nor hostility

could speak true words. In spite of all that he had heard, he could not believe that voodoo was so powerful in the island; this was the twentieth century, he insisted, and the most enlightened country in the world was less than fifteen hundred miles away; he forgot that opinions and not figures number the centuries, and refused to see that distance had nothing to do with the case. These were a people groping through the dark; when they saw the light they could not help but welcome it, he thought. The idea that they preferred their own way of life and their own religion, that they would not embrace civilization till they were forced to do so at the point of benevolent bayonets, never entered his head. His own way of life was so obviously superior. He resolved to have nothing more to do with Witherbee.

When he returned to the carpenter's house at about six that evening he entered the council of elders that he found there with the determination to place himself on an equality with them. It was to his credit that he accomplished this feat, but it was not surprising for the humility of his mind at least was genuine. He joined in their conversation, somewhat stiffly at first, but perhaps no more so than became a stranger. Presently, because he saw that he could not refuse without offending his host, he conquered prejudice and took a little rum and sugar and water. It went to his head without his knowing it, as rum has a habit of doing; he became cheerfully familiar with the old men and made long strides into their friendship—or thought he did. He did not once mention religion to them at that first meeting, though he had to exercise considerable self-restraint to prevent himself from doing so.

On his way home he met Father Antoine not far from Michaud's door. The priest would have passed with his usual surly look if Simpson had not stopped him.

"Well?" Antoine demanded.

"Why should we quarrel—you and I?" Simpson asked. "Can we not work together for these people of yours?"

"Your friends are not my people, heretic!" Father Antoine retorted. "Rot in hell with them!"

He plunged past Simpson and was gone down the darkling alley.

"You are late, m'sieu'," remarked Madame Picard as he

came into the kitchen and sat down in a chair near the cripple. Her manner was less rough than usual.

"I've been at Michaud's," he answered.

"Ah? But you were there this morning."

"He asked me to come this evening, when his friends came, madame. There were several there."

"They are often there," she answered. There was nothing significant in her tone, but Simpson had an uneasy feeling that she had known all the time of his visit to the carpenter.

"I met Father Antoine on the way home," he said.

"A bad man!" She flamed into sudden violence. "A bad man!"

"I had thought so." Her loquacity this evening was amazing. Simpson thought he saw an opening to her confidence and plunged in. "And he is a priest. It is bad, that. Here are sheep without a shepherd."

"*Quoi ?*"

"Here are many people—all good Christians." Simpson, eager and hopeful, leaned forward in his chair. His gaunt face with the down-drawn mouth and the hungry eyes—grown more hungry in the last three weeks—glowed, took on fervour; his hand shot out expressive fingers. The woman raised her head slowly, staring at him; more slowly still she seated herself at the table that stood between them. She rested her arms on it, and narrowed her eyelids as he spoke till her eyes glittered through the slits of them.

"All good Christians," Simpson went on; "and there is none to lead them save a black——" He slurred the word just in time. The woman's eyes flashed open and narrowed again. "Save a renegade priest," Simpson concluded. "It is wrong, is it not? And I knew it was wrong, though I live far away and came—was led—here to you." His voice, though it had not been loud, left the room echoing. "It was a real call." He whispered that.

"You are a Catholic?" asked Madame Picard.

"Yes. Of the English Catholic Church." He suspected that the qualifying adjective meant nothing to her, but let the ambiguity rest.

"I was not sure," she said slowly, "though you told the boy." Her eyes, velvet-black in the shadow upcast by the lamp, opened slowly. "There has been much trouble with

Father Antoine, and now small numbers go to mass or confession." Her voice had the effect of shrillness though it remained low; her hands flew out, grasping the table-edge at arms' length with an oddly masculine gesture. "He deserved that! To tell his *canaille* that I—that we—— He dared! But now—now—we shall see!"

Her voice rasped in a subdued sort of a shriek; she sprang up from her chair, and stood for the fraction of a second with her hands raised and her fists clinched. Simpson, puzzled, amazed, and a little scared at last, had barely time to notice the position before it dissolved. The child, frightened, screamed from the floor. "*Taisez-vous—taisez-vous, mon enfant. Le temps vient.*"

She was silent for a long time after that. Simpson sat wondering what she would do next, aware of an uncanny fascination that emanated from her. It seemed to him as though there were subterranean fires in the ground that he walked on.

"You shall teach us," she said in her usual monotone. "You shall teach us—preach to many people. No house will hold them all." She leaned down and caressed the child. "*Le temps vient, mon petit. Le temps vient.*"

Under Simpson's sudden horror quivered an eerie thrill. He mistook it for joy at the promised fulfilment of his dreams. He stepped to his own doorway and hesitated there with his hand on the latch.

"To many people? Some time, I hope."

"Soon." She looked up from the child; there was a snakiness in the angle of her head and neck. "Soon."

He opened the door, slammed it behind him, and dropped on tense knees beside his bed. In the kitchen the cripple laughed—laughed for a long time. Simpson's tightly pressed palms could not keep the sound from his ears.

IV

EACH night the gathering at Vieux Michaud's became larger; it grew too large for the house, and presently overflowed into the yard behind, where Michaud kept his lumber. Generally thirty or forty natives collected between six and seven in the evening, roosting on the piled boards or sitting

on the dusty ground in little groups, their cigarettes puncturing the blue darkness that clung close to the earth under the young moon. There were few women among them at first and fewer young men; Simpson, who knew that youth ought to be more hospitable to new ideas than age, thought this a little strange and spoke to Michaud about it.

"But they are my friends, m'sieu'," answered Michaud.

The statement might have been true of the smaller group that Simpson had first encountered at the carpenter's house; it was not true of the additions to it, for he was evidently not on intimate terms with them. Nor did he supply rum for all of them; many brought their own. That was odd also, if Simpson had only known it; the many *cantinas* offered attractions which the carpenter's house did not. That fact occurred to him at length.

"They have heard of you, m'sieu'—and that you have something new to say to them. We Haytians like new things."

Thus, very quietly, almost as though it had been a natural growth of interest, did Simpson's ministry begin. He stepped one evening to the platform that overhung the carpenter's backyard, and began to talk. Long study had placed the missionary method at his utter command, and he began with parables and simple tales which they heard eagerly. Purposely, he eschewed anything striking or startling in this his first sermon. It was an attempt to establish a sympathetic understanding between himself and his audience, and not altogether an unsuccessful one, for his motives were still unmixed. He felt that he had started well; when he was through speaking small groups gathered around him as children might have done, and told him inconsequent, wandering tales of their own—tales which were rather fables, folklore transplanted from another hemisphere and strangely crossed with Christianity. He was happy; if it had not been that most of them wore about their necks the leather pouches that were not scapulars he would have been happier than any man has a right to be. One of these pouches, showing through the ragged shirt of an old man with thin lips and a squint, was ripped at the edge, and the unmistakable sheen of a snake's scale glistened in the seam. Simpson could not keep his eyes from it.

He dared to be more formal after that, and on the next night preached from a text—the Macedonian cry, “Come over and help us.” That sermon also was effective: toward the end of it two or three women were weeping a little, and the sight of their tears warmed him with the sense of power. In that warmth certain of his prejudices and inhibitions began to melt away; the display of feelings and sensibilities could not be wicked or even undesirable if it prepared the way for the gospel by softening the heart. He began to dabble in emotion himself, and that was a dangerous matter, for he knew nothing whatever about it save that, if he felt strongly, he could arouse strong feeling in others. Day by day he unwittingly became less sure of the moral beauty of restraint, and ardours which he had never dreamed of began to flame free of his soul.

He wondered now and then why Madame Picard, who almost from the first had been a constant attendant at his meetings, watched him so closely, so secretly—both when he sat with her and the cripple at meals and at the carpenter’s house, where he was never unconscious of her eyes. He wondered also why she brought her baby with her, and why all who came fondled it so much and so respectfully. He did not wonder at the deference, almost the fear, which all men showed her—that seemed somehow her due. She had shed her taciturnity and was even voluble at times. But behind her volubility lurked always an inexplicable intensity of purpose whose cause Simpson could never fathom and was afraid to seek for. It was there, however—a nervous determination, not altogether alien to his own, which he associated with religion and with nothing else in the world. Religiosity, he called it—and he was not far wrong.

Soon after his first sermon he began little by little to introduce ritual into the meetings at Michaud’s, so that they became decorous; rum-drinking was postponed till after the concluding prayer, and that in itself was a triumph. He began to feel the need of hymns, and, since he could find in French none that had associations for himself, he set about translating some of the more familiar ones, mostly those of a militant nature. Some of them, especially “The Son of God goes forth to war,” leaped into immediate pop-

ularity and were sung two or three times in a single service. He liked that repetition; he thought it laid the groundwork for the enthusiasm which he aroused more and more as time went on, and which he took more pains to arouse. Nevertheless, the first time that his feverish eloquence brought tears and incoherent shoutings from the audience, he became suddenly fearful before the ecstasies which he had touched to life; he faltered, and brought his discourse to an abrupt end. As the crowd slowly quieted and reluctantly began to drift away there flashed on him with blinding suddenness the realization that his excitement had been as great as their own; for a moment he wondered if such passion were godly. Only for a moment, however; of course it was godly, as any rapture informed by religion must be. He was sorry he had lost courage and stopped so soon. These were an emotional and not an intellectual people—if they were to be reached at all, it must be through the channels of their emotions. Thus far he thought clearly, and that was as far as he did think, for he was discovering in himself a capacity for religious excitement that was only in part a reflex of the crowd's fervour, and the discovery quickened and adorned the memory of the few great moments of his life. Thus had he felt when he resolved to take orders; thus, although in a less degree, because he had been doubtful and afraid, had he felt when he heard the Macedonian cry from this West Indian island. He had swayed the crowd also as he had always believed that he could sway crowds if only the spirit would burn in him brightly enough; he had no doubt that he could sway them again, govern them completely perhaps. That possibility was cause for prayerful and lonely consideration, for meditation among the hills, whence he might draw strength. He hired a pony forthwith and set out for a few days in the hinterland.

It was the most perilous thing he could have done. There is neither sanctity nor holy calm in the tropic jungle, nothing of the hallowed quietude that, in northern forests, clears the mind of life's muddle and leads the soul to God. There lurks instead a poisonous anodyne in the heavy, scented air—a drug that lulls the spirit to an evil repose counterfeiting the peacefulness whence alone high thoughts can spring. In the North, Nature displays a certain restraint even in her

most flamboyant moods: the green fires of spring temper their sensuousness in chill winds, and autumn is rich in suggestion not of love, but of gracious age, having the aloof beauty of age and its true estimates of life. The perception of its loveliness is impersonal and leaves the line between the æsthetic and the sensuous clearly marked. Beneath a straighter sun the line is blurred and sometimes vanishes: no orchid-musk, no azure and distant hill, no tinted bay but accosts the senses, confusing one with another, mingling all the emotions in a single cup, persuading man that he knows good from evil as little as though he lived still in Eden. From such stealthy influences the man of rigid convictions is often in more danger than the man of no convictions at all, for rigid convictions rather often indicate inexperience and imperfect observation; experience, therefore—especially emotional experience—sometimes warps them into strange and hideous shapes.

Simpson did not find in the bush the enlightenment that he had hoped for. He did, however, anæsthetize his mind into the belief that he had found it. Returning, he approached Port au Prince by a route new to him. A well-beaten trail aroused his curiosity and he followed it into a grove of ceiba and mahogany. It was clear under foot, as no tropic grove uncared for by man can be clear; in the middle of it lay the ashes of a great fire, and three minaca-palm huts in good repair huddled almost invisible under the vast trees. The ground, bare of grass, was trodden hard, as though a multitude had stamped it down—danced it down, perhaps—and kept it bare by frequent use.

"What a place for a camp-meeting!" thought Simpson as he turned to leave it. "God's cathedral aisles, and roofed by God's blue sky."

His pony shied and whirled around, a long snake—a fer-de-lance—flowed across the path.

The desire to hold his services in the grove remained in his mind; the only reason he did not transfer them there at once was that he was not yet quite sure of his people. They came eagerly to hear him, they reflected his enthusiasm at his behest, they wept and praised God. Yet, underneath all his hopes and all his pride in what he had done ran a cold current of doubt, an undefined and indefinable fear of

something devilish and malign that might thwart him in the end.

He thrust it resolutely out of his mind.

V

"I HAVE told your people—your *canaille*," said Father Antoine, "that I shall excommunicate them all."

The priest had been graver than his wont—more dignified, less volcanic, as though he was but the mouthpiece of authority, having none of it himself.

"They are better out of your Church than in it," Simpson answered.

Father Antoine trembled a little; it was the first sign he had given that his violent personality was still alive under the perplexing new power that had covered it.

"You are determined?" Simpson nodded with compressed lips. "Their damnation be on your head, then."

The priest stood aside. Simpson squeezed by him on the narrow sidewalk; as he did so, Antoine drew aside the skirts of his cassock.

From the beginning Simpson had preached more of hell than of heaven; he could not help doing so, for he held eternal punishment to be more imminent than eternal joy, and thought it a finer thing to scare people into heaven than to attract them thither. He took an inverted pleasure also in dwelling on the tortures of the damned, and had combed the minor prophets and Revelation for threatening texts to hurl at his congregation. Such devil-worship, furthermore, gave him greater opportunity for oratory, greater immediate results also; he had used it sometimes against his better judgment, and was not so far gone that he did not sometimes tremble at the possible consequences of its use. His encounter with the priest, however, had driven all doubts from his mind, and that evening he did what he had never done before—he openly attacked the Roman Church.

"What has it done for you?" he shouted, and his voice rang in the rafters of the warehouse where a hundred or so Negroes had gathered to hear him. "What has it done for you? You cultivate your ground, and its tithes take the food from the mouths of your children. Does the priest tell you of

salvation, which is without money and without price, for all—for all—for all? Does he live among you as I do? Does he minister to your bodies? Or your souls?"

There was a stir at the door, and the eyes of the congregation turned from the platform.

"Father Antoine!" shrieked a voice. It was Madame Picard's; Simpson could see her in the gloom at the far end of the hall and could see the child astride of her hip. "Father Antoine! He is here!"

In response to the whip of her voice there was a roar like the roar of a train in a tunnel. It died away; the crowd eddied back upon the platform. Father Antoine—he was robed, and there were two acolytes with him, one with a bell and the other with a candle—began to read in a voice as thundering as Simpson's own.

"Excommunicado——"

The Latin rolled on, sonorous, menacing. It ceased; the candle-flame snuffed out, the bell tinkled, there was the flash of a cope in the doorway, and the priest was gone.

"He has excommunicated you!" Simpson shouted, almost shrieked. "Thank God for that, my people!"

They faced him again; ecstatic, beside himself, he flung at them incoherent words. But the Latin, mysterious as magic, fateful as a charm, had frightened them, and they did not yield to Simpson immediately. Perhaps they would not have yielded to him at all if it had not been for Madame Picard.

From her corner rose an eerie chant in broken minors; it swelled louder, and down the lane her people made for her she came dancing. Her turban was off, her dress torn open to the breasts; she held the child horizontally and above her in both hands. Her body swayed rhythmically, but she just did not take up the swing of the votive African dance that is as old as Africa. Up to the foot of the platform she wavered, and there the cripple joined her, laughing as always. Together they shuffled first to the right and then to the left, their feet marking the earth floor in prints that overlapped like scales. She laid the baby on the platform, sinking slowly to her knees as she did so; as though at a signal the wordless chant rumbled upward from the entire building, rolled over the platform like a wave, engulfing the white man in its flood.

"Symbolism! Sacrifice!" Simpson yelled. "She offers all to God!"

He bent and raised the child at arm's length above his head. Instantly the chanting ceased.

"To the grove!" screamed the *mamaloï*. She leaped to the platform, almost from her knees it seemed, and snatched the child. "To the grove!"

The crowd took up the cry; it swelled till Simpson's ears ached under the impact of it.

"To the grove!"

Doubt assailed him as his mind—a white man's mind—rebelled.

"This is wrong," he said dully; "wrong."

Madame Picard's fingers gripped his arm. Except for the spasms of the talons which were her fingers she seemed calm.

"No, m'sieu'," she said. "You have them now. Atonement—atonement, m'sieu'. You have many times spoken of atonement. But they do not understand what they cannot see. They are behind you—you cannot leave them now."

"But—the child?"

"The child shall show them—a child shall lead them, m'sieu'. They must see a *théâtre* of atonement—then they will believe. Come."

Protesting, he was swept into the crowd and forward—forward to the van of it, into the Grand Rue. Always the thunderous rumble of the mob continued; high shrieks flickered like lightning above it; the name of Christ dinned into his ears from foul throats. On one side of him the cripple appeared; on the other strode the *mamaloï*—the child, screaming with fear, on her hip. A hymn-tune stirred under the tumult—rose above it.

*"Le fils de Dieu se va t'en guerre
Son drapeau rouge comme sang."*

Wild quavers adorned the tune obscenely; the mob marched to it, falling into step. Torches came, flaming high at the edges of the crowd, flaming wan and lurid on hundreds of black faces.

*"Il va pour gagner sa couronne
Qui est-ce que suit dans son train?"*

"A crusade!" Simpson suddenly shouted. "It is a crusade!"

Yells answered him. Somewhere a drum began, reverberating as though unfixed in space; now before them, now behind; now, it seemed, in the air. The sound was maddening. A swaying began in the crowd that took on cadence, became a dance. Simpson, his brain drugged, his senses perfervid, marched on in exultation. These were his people at last.

The drum thundered more loudly, became unbearable. They were clear of the town and in the bush at last; huge fires gleamed through the trees, and the mob spilled into the grove. The cripple and the *mamaloï* were beside him still.

In the grove, with the drums—more than one of them now—palpitating unceasingly, the dancing became wilder, more savage. In the light of the fire the *mamaloï* swayed, holding the screaming child, and close to the flames crouched the cripple. The hymn had given place to the formless chant, through which the minors quivered like the wails of lost souls.

The scales fell from Simpson's eyes. He rose to his full height and stretched out his arm, demanding silence; there was some vague hope in him that even now he might guide them. His only answer was a louder yell than ever.

It took form. Vieux Michaud sprang from the circle into the full firelight, feet stamping, eyes glaring.

"*La chèvre!*" he yelled. "*La chèvre sans cornes!*"

The drums rolled in menacing crescendo, the fire licked higher. All sounds melted into one.

"*La chèvre sans cornes!*"

The *mamaloï* tore the child from her neck and held it high by one leg. Simpson, seeing clearly as men do before they die, flung himself toward her.

The cripple's knife, thrust from below, went home between his ribs just as the *mamaloï's* blade crossed the throat of the sacrifice.

"So I signed the death-certificate," Witherbee concluded. "Death at the hands of persons unknown."

"And they'll call him a martyr," said Bunsen.

"Who knows?" the consul responded gravely. "Perhaps he was one."

MARTIN GARRITY GETS EVEN

By COURTNEY RYLEY COOPER AND LEO. F. CREAGAN

From American Magazine

THE entrance of Martin Garrity, superintendent of the Blue Ribbon Division of the O. R. & T. Railroad, had been attended by all the niceties of such an occasion, when Martin, grand, handsome, and magnificent, arrived at his office for the day. True to form, he had cussed out the office boy, spoken in fatherly fashion to the trainmaster over the telephone about the lateness of No. 210, remarked to the stenographer that her last letter had looked like the exquisite tracks of a cow's hoof—and then he had read two telegrams. A moment later, white, a bit stooped, a little old in features, he had left the office, nor had he paused to note the grinning faces of those in his wake, those who had known hours before!

Home, and stumbling slightly as he mounted the steps of the veranda, he faced a person in screaming foulard and a red toque, Mrs. Jewel Garrity, just starting for the morning's assault upon the market. Wordlessly he poked forward the first of the telegrams as he pulled her within the hall and shut the door. And with bulging eyes Jewel read it aloud:

Chicago, April 30.

GARRITY,
Montgomery City:

Effective arrival successor J. P. Aldrich must dispense your valuable services. Kindly forward resignation by wire confirming this telegram.

W. W. WALKER,
Vice-President & General
Manager.

"And who is this Walker person?" Jewel asked, with a vindictive gasp. "'Tis me that never heard of him. Why

should he sign hisself vice president and general manager, when the whole world knows Mr. Barstow, bless his soul, is the——”

“Will ye listen?” Martin bellowed with sorrowful asperity. “Somethin’s happened. And now:

GARRITY,
Montgomery City.

Alabaster abound celebrity conglomerate commensurate constituency effective arrival successor. Meet me Planters Hotel St. Louis this P. M.

LEMUEL C. BARSTOW.

And while Jewel gasped Martin went on:

“’Tis code it is, from Barstow. It says Walker’s taken his place—and I’m out.”

Mouth drawn at the corners, hand trembling slightly, Jewel reached for the message and stared blankly at the railroad code. Then silently she turned and thumped up the stairs. In a moment she was down again; the screaming foulard had given place to a house dress; the red toque had been substituted by a shawl. But the lips were drawn no longer—a smile was on them, and a soft hand touched Martin’s white cheek as she reached the door.

“’Tis me that’s goin’ to the cash-carry, Marty darlin’,” came quietly. “I never liked that high-toned market annyhow. About—about that other, Marty, me bye, ’tis all right, it is, it is. We can always start over again.”

Over again! It had opened the doors of memory for Martin Garrity as, at the window, he stared after her with eyes that saw in the portly, middle-aged figure a picture of other days, when the world had centred about a fluttering honour flag, which flew above a tiny section house at a bit of a place called Glen Echo, when the rotund form of Jewel Garrity was slender and graceful, when Martin’s freckled face was thinner and more engaging, and when——

Visions of the old days floated before him, days on the section with his crew of “snipes” back in the Honour Flag times. Memories returned to him, of blazing hours in the summer, when even the grease-lizards panted and died, when the heat rays curled in maddening serpent-like spirals before his glazed eyes.

And why? Why had he been willing to sacrifice, to work for wages pitiful indeed, compared to the emoluments of other lines of endeavour? Why had she, his Jewel, accepted the loneliness, the impoverishment of those younger days with light-heartedness? He never had thought of it before. Now, deposed, dethroned, defeated at the very pinnacle of his life, the answer came, with a force that brought a lump to his throat and a tear to his eyes. Why? Because they had loved this great, human, glistening thing of shining steel and thundering noise, loved it because the Blue Ribbon division had included the Blue Ribbon section, their section, which they had built together.

Now, all they had worked for, lived for, longed for, and enjoyed together had been taken away, without warning, without reason, and given to another! Martin groaned with the thought of it. Three hours later he kissed his Jewel good-bye, roaring at her because a tear stood in each eye—to cover the fact that tears were in his own. That night, still grim, still white, he faced Lemuel C. Barstow, former vice-president and general manager of the O. R. & T. in his hotel room in St. Louis. That person spoke with biting directness.

"Politics, Martin," came his announcement. "They shelved me because I wouldn't play the tricks of a clique that got into power before I could stop 'em. You were my pet appointee, so you went, too. It wasn't because we weren't efficient. They lifted the pin on me, and that meant you. So here we are. But"—and a fist banged on the table—"they're going to pay for it! This new crowd knows as much about railroading as a baby does about chess. I tried to tell that to the men with the money. They wouldn't listen. So I went to men who could hear, the Ozark Central. I'm to be the new president of that road."

"That wooden axle outfit?" Martin squinted. "Sure, Mr. Barstow, I'm not knockin' the new deal, or——"

"Never mind that." Lemuel C. Barstow smiled genially. "That's where your part of the job comes in. That's why I need you. But we'll let that go for the present. Go back to Montgomery City, turn over the reins to this new fish, who doesn't know an air brake from a boiler tube, and keep quiet until I send for you."

Then ensued two weeks of nothing to do but wait. Nothing to do but to pace the floor like some belligerent, red-faced caged animal, daring his Jewel to feel hurt because sneering remarks had been made about her husband's downfall. Two weeks—then came the summons.

"Careful now, Martin! No wild throws, remember!" Lemuel Barstow was giving the final instructions. "We've got a big job ahead. I've brought you down here because you have the faculty of making men think they hate you—then going out and working their heads off for you, because, well, to be frank, you're the biggest, blunderingest, hardest-working blusterer that I ever saw—and you're the only man who can pull me through. This road's in rotten shape, especially as concerns the roadbed. The steel and ties are all right, but the ballast is rotten. You've got to make it the best in Missouri, and you've got only eight months to do it in. So tear loose. Your job's that of special superintendent, with no strings on it. Pay no attention to any one but me. If you need equipment, buy it and tell the purchasing agent to go to the hot place. By March 1st, and no later, I want the track from St. Louis to Kansas City to be as smooth as a ballroom floor."

"And why the rush?"

"Just this: The O. R. & T. treated me like a dirty dog. I'm going to make 'em pay for it; I'm after my pound of flesh now! There's just one thing that road prizes above all else—it's St. Louis-Kansas City mail contracts. The award comes up again in March. The system that can make the fastest time in the government speed trials gets the plum. Understand?"

"I do!" answered Martin, with the first real enthusiasm he had known in weeks. "'Tis me budget I'll be fixin' up immediate at once. Ye'll get action, ye will." He departed for a frenzied month. Then he returned at the request of President Barstow.

"You're doing wonderful work, Martin," said that official. "It's coming along splendidly. But—but—— I understand there's a bit of a laugh going around among the railroad men about you."

"About me?" Garrity's chest bulged aggressively. "An' who's laughin?"

"Nearly everybody in the railroad game in Missouri. They

say you let some slick salesman sting you for a full set of Rocky Mountain snow-fighting machinery, even up to a rotary snow plough. I——”

“Sting me?” Martin bellowed the words. “That I did not!”

“Good! I knew——”

“I ordered it of me own free will. And if annybody laughs——”

“But, Martin”—and there was pathos in the voice—“a rotary snow plough? On a Missouri railroad? Flangers, jull-ploughs, wedge ploughs—tunnel wideners—and a rotary? Here? Why—I—I thought better of you than that. We haven’t had a snow in Missouri that would require all of those things, not in the last ten years. What did they cost?”

“Eighty-three thousand, fi’hunnerd an’ ten dollars,” answered Martin gloomily. He *had* pulled a boner. Mr. Barstow figured on a sheet of paper.

“At three dollars a day, that would hire nearly a thousand track labourers for thirty days. A thousand men could tamp a lot of ballast in a month, Martin.”

“That they could, sir,” came dolefully. Then Garrity, the old lump in his throat, waited to be excused, and backed from the office. That rotary snow plough had been his own, his pet idea—and it had been wrong!

Gloomily he returned to Northport, his headquarters, there to observe a group of grinning railroad men gathered about a great, bulky object parked in front of the roundhouse. Behind it were other contraptions of shining steel, all of which Martin recognized without a second glance—his snow-fighting equipment, just arrived. Nor did he approach for a closer view. Faintly he heard jeering remarks from the crowd; then laughter. He caught the mention of his own name, coupled with derisive comment. His hands clenched. His red neck bulged. His big lungs filled—then slowly deflated; and Martin went slowly homeward, in silence.

“And is it your liver?” asked Jewel Garrity as they sat at dinner.

“It is not!” bawled Martin. He rose. He pulled his napkin from his chin with Garrity emphasis and dropped it in the gravy. He thumped about the table, then stopped.

One big freckled paw reached uncertainly outward and plunked with intended gentleness upon the woman's shoulder, to rest, trembling there, a second. Then silently Martin went on upstairs. For that touch had told her that it was—his heart!

A heart that ached with a throbbing sorrow which could not be downed as the summer passed and Martin heard again and again the reflexes brought about by the purchase of his snow ploughs. Vainly he stormed up and down the line of the Ozark Central with its thousands of labourers. Vainly he busied himself with a thousand intricacies of construction, in the hope of forgetfulness. None of it could take from his mind the fact that railroad men were laughing at him, that chuckling train-butchers were pointing out the giant machinery to grinning passengers, that even the railroad journals were printing funny quips about Barstow's prize superintendent and his mountain snow plough. Nor could even the news that Aldrich, over on the Blue Ribbon division, was allowing that once proud bit of rail to degenerate into an ordinary portion of a railroad bring even a passing cheer. They, too, were laughing! In a last doglike hope Martin looked up the precipitation reports. It only brought more gloom. Only four times in thirty years had there been a snowfall in Missouri that could block a railroad!

The summer crept into autumn; autumn to early winter, bringing with it the transformation of the rickety old Ozark Central to a smooth, well-cushioned line of gleaming steel, where the trains shot to and fro with hardly a tremor, where the hollow thunder of culvert and trestle spoke of sturdy strength, where the trackwalker searched in vain for loose plates or jutting joints; but to Garrity, it was only the fulfilment or the work of a mechanical second nature. December was gliding by in warmth and sunshine. January came, with no more than a hatful of snow, and once more Martin found himself facing the president.

"We'll win that contract, Martin!" It almost brought a smile to the superintendent's face. "I've just been over the road—on the quiet. We made eighty miles an hour with hardly a jolt!"

"Thankee, sir." A vague sense of joy touched Martin's aching heart—only to depart.

"By the way, I noticed when I went through Northport that you've still got that rotary where everybody can see it. I wish you'd move that stuff—behind the roundhouse, out of sight."

Then Martin, heavier at heart than ever, went back to Northport. There he said a quaking good-bye to his last hope—and executed the president's orders, trying not to notice the grins of the "goat" crew as they shunted the machinery into hiding. That night, after Jewel was asleep, and the cat outside had ceased yowling, Martin climbed stealthily out of bed and went on his knees, praying with all the fervour of his big being for snow. And the prayer was answered——

By the worst rain that a Missouri January had known in years, scattering the freshly tamped gravel, loosening the piles of trestles, sending Martin forth once more to bawl his orders with the thunder of the old days back at Glen Echo, even to leap side by side with the track labourers, a tamping bar in his big hands, that one more blow might be struck, one more impression made upon the giant task ahead.

January slid by; February went into the third week before the job was finished. Martin looked at the sky with hopeful eyes. It was useless. March the first—and Martin went into St. Louis to make his report, and to spend an uneasy, restless night with the president in his room at the hotel.

"It's only a few days off now"—they were in bed the next morning, finishing the conversation begun the night before—"and I want you to keep your eyes open every second! The mail marathon agreement reads that no postponement can be made on account of physical or mechanical obstacles. If a trestle should happen to go out—that would be our finish."

"I wish"—Martin rolled out of bed and groped for his shoes—"we'd been workin' with me old Blue Ribbon division. I know every foot o'——"

"Oh, chase the Blue Ribbon division! Every time I see you you've got something on your chest about it. Why, man, don't you know it's the Blue Ribbon division that I'm counting on! Aldrich has let it run down until it's worse than a hog trail. If they can make forty-five an hour on it, I'm crazy. You can't win mail contracts with that. So forget it. Anyhow, you're working for the Ozark Central now."

Martin nodded, then for a long moment crouched silent, humiliated, his thick fingers fumbling with the laces of his shoes. At last, with a sigh, he poked his shirt into his trousers and thumped across the room to raise the drawn shades.

He stared. He gulped. He yelped—with an exclamation of joy, of deliverance, of victory! The outside world was white! A blinding, swirling veil shrouded even the next building. The street below was like a stricken thing; the vague forms of the cars seemed to no more than crawl. Wildly Martin pawed for the telephone and bawled a number. Barstow sat up in bed.

“Snow!” he gasped. “A blizzard!”

“Order the snow ploughs!” Garrity had got the chief dispatcher, and was bawling louder than ever. “All of thim! Put an injine on each and keep thim movin’! Run that rotary till the wheels drop off!”

Then he whirled, grasping wildly at coat, hat, and overcoat.

“And now will ye laugh?” he roared, as he backed to the door. “Now will ye laugh at me snow plough?”

Twenty-four hours later, when trains were limping into terminals hours behind time, when call after call was going forth to summon aid for the stricken systems of Missouri, when double-headers, frost-caked wheels churning uselessly, bucked the drifts in a constantly losing battle; when cattle trains were being cut from the schedules, and every wire was loaded with the messages of frantic officials, someone happened to wonder what that big boob Garrity was doing with his snow ploughs. The answer was curt and sharp—there on the announcement board of the Union Station:

OZARK CENTRAL ALL TRAINS ON TIME

But Martin had only one remark to make, that it still was snowing. Noon of the third day came, and the Ozark Central became the detour route of every cross-Missouri mail train. Night, and Martin Garrity, snow-crusted, his face cut and cracked by the bite of wind and the sting of splintered, wind-driven ice, his head aching from loss of sleep, but his heart thumping with happiness, took on the serious business of moving every St. Louis-Kansas City passenger and express train, blinked vacuously when someone called him a wizard.

Railroad officials gave him cigars, and slapped him on his snow-caked shoulders. He cussed them out of the way. The telephone at Northport clanged and sang with calls from President Barstow; but Martin only waved a hand in answer as he ground through with the rotary.

"Tell him to send me tilegrams!" he blustered. "Don't he know I'm busy?"

Twelve hours more. The snow ceased. The wind died. Ten miles out of Kansas City Martin gave the homeward-bound order for Northport, then slumped weakly into a corner. Five minutes before he had heard the news—news that hurt. The O. R. & T., fighting with every available man it could summon, had partially opened its line, with the exception of one division, hopelessly snowed under—his old, his beloved Blue Ribbon.

"'Tis me that would have kept 'er open," he mused bitterly. "And they fired me!"

He nodded and slept. He awoke—and he said the same thing again. He reached Northport, late at night, to roar at Jewel and the hot water she had heated for his frost-bitten feet—then to hug her with an embrace that she had not known since the days when her Marty wore a red undershirt.

"And do ye be hearin'?" she asked. "The Blue Ribbon's tied up! Not a wheel——"

"Will ye shut up?" Martin suddenly had remembered something. The mail test! Not forty-eight hours away! He blinked. One big hand smacked into the other. "The pound of flesh!" he bellowed. "Be gar! The pound of flesh!"

"And what are ye talkin'——"

"Woman, shut up," said Martin Garrity. "'Tis me that's goin' to bed. See that I'm not disturbed. Not even for Mr. Barstow."

"That I will," said Jewel—but that she didn't. It was Martin himself who answered the pounding on the door four hours later, then, in the frigid dining room, stared at the message which the chief dispatcher had handed him:

GARRITY, NORTHPORT: If line is free of snow assemble all snow-fighting equipment and necessary locomotives to handle same, delivering same fully equipped and manned with your own force to Blue Ribbon Division

O. R. & T. Accompany this equipment personally to carry out instructions as I would like to have them carried out. Everything depends on your success or failure to open this line.

LEMUEL C. BARSTOW.

So! He was to make the effort; but if he failed that mail contract came automatically to the one road free to make the test, the Ozark Central! That was what Barstow meant! Make the effort, appear to fight with every weapon, that the O. R. & T. might have no claim in the future of unfairness—but to fail! Let it be so! The O. R. & T. had broken his heart. Now, at last, his turn had come!

He turned to the telephone and gave his orders. Then up the stairs he clambered and into his clothes. Jewel snorted and awoke.

"Goo'by!" roared Martin as he climbed into his coat. "They've sent for me to open the Blue Ribbon."

"And have they?" Jewel sat up, her eyes beaming. "I'd been wishin' it—and ye'll do it, Marty; I've been thinkin' about the old section snowed under—and all the folks we knew——"

"Will ye shut up?" This was something Martin did not want to hear. Out of the house he plumped, to the waiting double-header of locomotives attached to the rotary, and the other engines, parked on the switches, with their wedge ploughs, jull-ploughs, flangers, and tunnel wideners. The "high-ball" sounded. At daybreak, boring his way through the snow-clogged transfer at Missouri City, Martin came out upon the main line of the O. R. & T.—and to his duty of revenge.

On they went, a slow, deliberate journey, steam hissing, black smoke curling, whistles tooting, wheels crunching, as the rotary bucked the bigger drifts and the smaller ploughs eliminated the slighter raises, a triumphant procession toward that thing which Martin knew he could attack with all the seeming ferocity of desperation and yet fail—the fifty-foot thickness of Bander Cut.

Face to face, in the gaunt sun of early morning he saw it—a little shack, half covered with snow, bleak and forbidding in its loneliness, yet all in all to the man who stared at it with eyes suddenly wistful—his little old section house, where once the honour flag had flown.

He gulped. Suddenly his hand tugged at the bell cord. Voices had come from without, they were calling his name! He sought the door, then gulped again. The steps and platform of his car were filled with eager, homely-faced men, men he had known in other days, his old crew of section "snipes."

All about him they crowded; Martin heard his voice answering their queries, as though someone were talking far away. His eyes had turned back to that section house, seeking instinctively the old flag, his flag. It spoke for a man who gave the best that was in him, who surpassed because he worked with his heart and with his soul in the every task before him. But the flag was not there. The pace had not been maintained. Then the louder tones of a straw boss called him back:

"You'll sure need that big screw and all the rest of them babies, Garrity. That ole Bander Cut's full to the sky—and Sni-a-bend Hill! Good-night! But you'll make 'er. You've got to, Garrity; we've made up a purse an' bet it down in Montgomery that you'll make 'er!"

Martin went within and the crew waited for a high-ball order that did not come. In his private car, alone, Martin Garrity was pacing the floor. The call of the old division, which he had loved and built, was upon him, swaying him with all the force of memory.

"I guess we could sell the flivver——" he was repeating. "Then I've got me diamond . . . and Jewel . . . she's got a bit, besides what we've saved bechune us. And he'll win the test, anyhow . . . they'll never beat him over this division . . . if I give him back what I've earned . . . and if he wins anyhow——"

Up ahead they still waited. Fifteen minutes. Twenty. At last a figure appeared in the cab of the big rotary, looking for a last time at that bleak little section house and the bare flagpole. Then:

"Start 'er up and give 'er hell!"

Martin was on the job once more, while outside his old section snipes cheered, and reminded him that their hopes and dreams for a division still beloved in spite of a downfall rested upon his shoulders. The whistles screamed. The bells clanged. Smoke poured from the stacks of the double-header, and the freshening sun, a short time later, glinted

upon the white-splotched equipment, as the great auger, followed by its lesser allies, bored into the mass of snow at Bander Cut.

Hours of backing and filling, of retreats and attacks, hours in which there came, time after time, the opportunity to quit. But Martin did not give the word. Out the other side they came, the steam shooting high, and on toward the next obstacle, the first of forty, lesser and greater, which lay between them and Montgomery City.

Afternoon . . . night. Still the crunching, whining roar of the rotary as it struck the icy stretches fought against them in vain, then retreated until pick and bar and dynamite could break the way for its further attack. Midnight, and one by one the exhausted crew approached the white-faced, grim-lipped man who stood tense and determined in the rotary cab. One by one they asked the same question:

"Hadn't we better tie up for the night?"

"Go on! D'ye hear me? Go on! What is it ye are, annyhow, a bunch of white-livered cowards that ye can't work without rest?"

The old, dynamic, bulldozing force, the force that had made men hate Martin Garrity only to love him, had returned into its full power, the force that had built him from a section snipe to the exalted possessor of the blue pennon which once had fluttered from that flagpole, was again on the throne, fighting onward to the conclusion of a purpose, no matter what it might wreck for him personally, no matter what the cost might be to him in the days to come. He was on his last job—he knew that. The mail contract might be won a thousand times over, but there ever would rest the stigma that he had received a telegram which should have been plain to him, and that he had failed to carry out its hidden orders. But with the thought of it Martin straightened, and he roared anew the message which carried tired, aching men through the night:

"Go on! Go on! What's stoppin' ye? Are ye going to let these milk-an'-water fellys over here say that ye tried and quit?"

Early morning—and there came Sni-a-bend Hill, with the snow packed against it in a new plane which obliterated the

railroad as though it had never been there. Hot coffee came from the containers, sandwiches from the baskets, and the men ate and drank as they worked—all but Garrity. This was the final battle, and with it came his battle cry:

“Keep goin’! This is the tough one—we’ve got to go on—we’ve got to go on!”

And on they went. The streaking rays of dawn played for a moment upon an untroubled mound of white, smooth and deep upon the eastern end of Sni-a-bend. Then, as though from some great internal upheaval, the mass began to tremble. Great heaps of snow broke from their place and tumbled down the embankment. From farther at the rear, steam, augmented by the vapours of melting snow and the far-blown gushes of spitting smoke, hissed upward toward the heights of the white-clad hill. Then a bulging break—the roar of machinery, and a monster came grinding forth, forcing its way hungrily onward, toward the next and smaller contest. Within the giant auger a man turned to Garrity.

“Guess it’s over, Boss. They said up at Glen Echo——”

A silent nod. Then Garrity turned, and reaching into the telegram-blank holder at the side of the cab, brought forth paper and an envelope. Long he wrote as the rotary clattered along, devouring the smaller drifts in steady succession, a letter of the soul, a letter which told of an effort that had failed, of a decision that could not hold. And it told, too, of the return of all that Martin had worked for—Mr. Barstow had been good to him, and he, Martin Garrity, could not take his money and disobey him. He’d pay him back.

Whistles sounded, shrieking in answer to the tooting of others from far away, the wild eerie ones of yard engines, the deeper, throatier tones of factories. It was the end. Montgomery City!

Slowly Martin addressed the envelope, and as the big bore came to a stop, evaded the thronging crowds and sought the railroad mail box. He raised the letter. . . .

“Mr. Garrity!” He turned. The day agent was running toward him. “Mr. Garrity, Mr. Barstow wants to see you. He’s here—in the station. He came to see the finish.”

So the execution must be a personal one! The letter was crunched into a pocket. Dimly, soddently, Martin followed

the agent. As through a haze he saw the figure of Barstow and felt that person tug at his sleeve.

"Come over here, where we can talk in private!" There was a queer ring in the voice and Martin obeyed. Then: "Shake, Old Kid!"

Martin knew that a hand was clasping his. But why?

"You made it! I knew you would. Didn't I tell you we'd get our pound of flesh?"

"But—but the contract——"

"To thunder with the contract!" came the happy answer of Barstow. "If you had only answered the 'phone, you wouldn't be so much in the dark. What do I care about mail contracts now—with the best two lines in Missouri under my supervision? Don't you understand? This was the hole that I had prayed for this O. R. & T. bunch to get into from the first minute I saw that snow. They would have been tied up for a week longer—if it hadn't been for us. Can't you see? It was the argument I needed—that politics isn't what counts—it's brains and doing things! Now do you understand? Well"—and Barstow stood off and laughed—"if I have to diagram things for you, the money interests behind the O. R. & T. have seen the light. I'll admit it took about three hours of telephoning to New York to cause the illumination; but they've seen it, and that's enough. They also have agreed to buy the Ozark Central and to merge the two. Further, they have realized that the only possible president of the new lines is a man with brains like, for instance, Lemuel C. Barstow, who has working directly with him a general superintendent—and don't overlook that general part—a *general* superintendent named Martin Garrity!"

STRANGER THINGS

By MILDRED CRAM

From *Metropolitan Magazine*

WE WERE seated in the saloon of a small steamer which plies between Naples and Trieste on irregular schedule. Outside, the night was thickly black and a driving rain swept down the narrow decks.

"You Englishmen laugh at ghosts," the Corsican merchant said. "In my country, we are less pretentious. Frankly, we are afraid. You, too, are afraid, and so you laugh! A difference, it seems to me, which lies, not in the essence but in the manner."

Doctor Fenton smiled queerly. "Perhaps. What do any of us know about it, one way or the other? Ticklish business! We poke a little too far beyond our ken and get a shock that withers our souls. Cosmic force! We stumble forward, bleating for comfort, and fall over a charged cable. It may have been put there to hold us out—or in."

Aldobrandini, the Italian inventor, was playing cards with a German engineer. He lost the game to his opponent, and turning about in his chair, came into the conversation.

"You are talking about ghosts. I have seen them. Once in the Carso. Again on the campagna near Rome. I met a company of Cæsar's legionaries tramping through a bed of asphodels. The asphodels lay down beneath those crushing sandals, and then stood upright again, unharmed."

The engineer shuffled the cards between short, capable fingers. "Ghosts. Yes, I agree; there are such things. Created out of our subconscious selves; mirages of the mind; photographic spiritual projections; hereditary memories. There are always explanations."

Doctor Fenton poked into the bowl of his pipe with a broad

thumb. "Did any of you happen to know the English poet, Cecil Grimshaw? No? I'll tell you a story about him if you care to listen. A long story, I warn you. Very curious. Very suggestive. I cannot vouch for the entire truth of it, since I got the tale from many sources—a word here, a chance encounter there, and at last only the puzzling reports of men who saw Grimshaw out in Africa. He wasn't a friend of mine, or I wouldn't tell these things."

Aldobrandini's dark eyes softened. He leaned forward. "Cecil Grimshaw . . . We Latins admire his work more than that of any modern Englishman."

The doctor tipped his head back against the worn red velvet of the lounge. An oil lamp, swinging from the ceiling, seemed to isolate him in a pool of light. Outside, the invisible sea raced astern, hissing slightly beneath the driving impact of the rain.

I first heard of Grimshaw [the doctor began] in my student days in London. He was perhaps five years my senior, just beginning to be famous, not yet infamous, but indiscreet enough to get himself talked about. He had written a little book of verse, "Vision of Helen," he called it, I believe. . . . The oblique stare of the hostile Trojans. Helen coifed with flame. Menelaus. Love . . . Greater men than Grimshaw had written of Priam's tragedy. His audacity called attention to his imperfect, colourful verse, his love of beauty, his sense of the exotic, the strange, the unhealthy. People read his book on the sly and talked about it in whispers. It was indecent, but it was beautiful. At that time you spoke of Cecil Grimshaw with disapproval, if you spoke of him at all, or, if you happened to be a prophet, you saw in him the ultimate bomb beneath the Victorian literary edifice. And so he was.

I saw him once at the Alhambra—poetry in a top hat! He wore evening clothes that were a little too elaborate, a white camellia in his buttonhole, and a thick-lensed monocle on a black ribbon. During the entr'acte he stood up and surveyed the house from pit to gallery, as if he wanted to be seen. He was very tall and the ugliest man in England. Imagine the body of a Lincoln, the hands of a woman, the jaw and mouth of Disraeli, an aristocratic nose, unpleasant eyes,

and then that shock of yellow hair—hyacinthine—the curly locks of an insane virtuoso or a baby prodigy.

"Who is that?" I demanded.

"Grimshaw. The chap who wrote the book about naughty Helen. *La belle Hélène* and the shepherd boy."

I stared. Everyone else stared. The pit stopped shuffling and giggling to gaze at that prodigious monstrosity, and people in the boxes turned their glasses on him. Grimshaw seemed to be enjoying it. He spoke to someone across the aisle and smiled, showing a set of huge white teeth, veritable tombstones.

"Abominable," I said.

But I got his book and read it. He was the first Englishman to dare break away from literary conventions. Of course he shocked England. He was a savage æsthete. I read the slim volume through at one sitting; I was horrified and fascinated.

I met Grimshaw a year later. He was having a play produced at the Lyceum—"The Labyrinth"—with Esther Levenson as Simonetta. She entertained for him at her house in Chelsea and I got myself invited because I wanted to see the atrocious genius at close range. He wore a lemon-coloured vest and lemon-yellow spats.

"How d'you do?" he said, gazing at me out of those queer eyes of his. "I hear that you admire my work."

"You have been misinformed," I replied. "Your work interests me, because I am a student of nervous and mental diseases."

"Ah. Psychotherapy."

"All of the characters in your poem, 'The Vision of Helen,' are neurotics. They suffer from morbid fears, delusions, hysteria, violent mental and emotional complexities. A text-book in madness."

Grimshaw laughed. "You flatter me. I am attracted by neurotic types. Insanity has its source in the unconscious, and we English are afraid of looking inward." He glanced around the crowded room with an amused and cynical look. "Most of these people are as bad as my Trojans, Doctor Fenton. Only they conceal their badness, and it isn't good for them."

We talked for a few moments. I amused him, I think. by

my diagnosis of his Helen's mental malady. But he soon tired of me and his restless gaze went over my head, searching for admiration. Esther Levenson brought Ellen Terry over and he forgot me entirely in sparkling for the good lady—showing his teeth, shaking his yellow locks, bellowing like a centaur.

"The fellow's an ass," I decided.

But when "The Labyrinth" was produced, I changed my mind. There again was that disturbing loveliness. It was a story of the passionate Florence of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Esther Levenson drifted through the four long acts against a background of Tuscan walls, scarlet hangings, oaths, blood-spilling, dark and terrible vengeance. Grimshaw took London by the throat and put it down on its knees.

Then for a year or two he lived on his laurels, lapping up admiration like a drunkard in his cups. Unquestionably, Esther Levenson was his mistress, since she presided over his house in Cheyne Walk. They say she was not the only string to his lute. A Jewess, a Greek poetess, and a dancer from Stockholm made up his amorous medley at that time. Scandalized society flocked to his drawing-room, there to be received by Simonetta herself, wearing the blanched draperies and tragic pearls of the labyrinth he had made for her. Grimshaw offered no apologies. He was the uncrowned laureate and kings can do no wrong. He was painted by the young Sargent, of course, and by the aging Whistler—you remember the butterfly's portrait of him in a yellow kimono leaning against a black mantel? I, for one, think he was vastly amused by all this fury of admiration; he despised it and fed upon it. If he had been less great, he would have been utterly destroyed by it, even then.

I went to Vienna, and lost track of him for several years. Then I heard that he had married a dear friend of mine—Lady Dagmar Cooper, one of the greatest beauties and perhaps the sternest prude in England. She wrote me, soon after that unbelievable mating: "I have married Cecil Grimshaw. I know you won't approve; I do not altogether approve myself. He is not like the men I have known—not at all *English*. But he intrigues me; there is a sense of power behind his awfulness—you see I know that he is awful! I think I will be able to make him look at things—I mean visible, material things—

my way. We have taken a house in town and he has promised to behave—no more Chelsea parties, no dancers, no yellow waistcoats and chrysanthemums. That was all very well for his 'student' days. Now that he is a personage, it will scarcely do. I am tremendously interested and happy. . . ."

Interested and happy! She was a typical product of Victoria's reign, a beautiful creature whose faith was pinned to the most unimportant things—class, position, a snobbish religion, a traditional morality and her own place in an intricate little world of ladies and gentlemen. God save us! What was Cecil Grimshaw going to do in an atmosphere of titled bores, bishops, military men, and cautious statesmen? I could fancy him in his new town house, struggling through some endless dinner party—his cynical, stone-gray eyes sweeping up and down the table, his lips curled in that habitual sneer, his mind, perhaps, gone back to the red-and-blue room in Chelsea, where he had been wont to stand astride before the black mantel, bellowing indecencies into the ears of witty modernists. Could he bellow any longer?

Apparently not. I heard of him now and then from this friend and that. He was indeed "behaving" well. He wrote nothing to shock the sensibilities of his wife's world—a few fantastic short stories, touched with a certain childish spirituality, and that was all. They say that he bent his manners to hers—a tamed centaur grazing with a milk-white doe. He grew a trifle fat. Quite like a model English husband, he called Dagmar "My dear" and drove with her in the Park at the fashionable hour, his hands crossed on the head of his cane, his eyes half closed. She wrote me: "I am completely happy. So is Cecil. Surely he can have made no mistake in marrying me."

You all know that this affectation of respectability did not last long—not more than five years; long enough for the novelty to wear off. The genius or the devil that was in Cecil Grimshaw made its reappearance. He was tossed out of Dagmar's circle like a burning rock hurled from the mouth of a crater; he fell into Chelsea again. Esther Levenson had come back from the States and was casting about for a play. She sought out Grimshaw and with her presence, her grace and pallor and seduction, lured him into his old ways. "The

leaves are yellow," he said to her, "but still they dance in a south wind. The altar fires are ash and grass has grown upon the temple floor—I have been away too long. Get me my pipe, you laughing dryad, and I will play for you."

He played for her and all England heard. Dagmar heard and pretended acquiescence. According to her lights, she was magnificent—she invited Esther Levenson to Broadenham, the Grimshaw place in Kent, nor did she wince when the actress accepted. When I got back to England, Dagmar was fighting for his soul with all the weapons she had. I went to see her in her cool little town house, that house so typical of her, so untouched by Grimshaw. And, looking at me with steady eyes, she said: "I'm sorry Cecil isn't here. He's writing again—a play—for Esther Levenson, who was Simonetta, you remember?"

I promised you a ghost story. If it is slow in coming, it is because all these things have a bearing on the mysterious, the extraordinary things that happened——

You probably know about the last phase of Grimshaw's career—who doesn't? There is something fascinating about the escapades of a famous man, but when he happens also to be a great poet, we cannot forget his very human sins—in them he is akin to us.

Not all you have heard and read about Grimshaw's career is true. But the best you can say of him is bad enough. He squandered his own fortune first—on Esther Levenson and the production of "The Sunken City"—and then stole ruthlessly from Dagmar; that is, until she found legal ways to put a stop to it. We had passed into Edward's reign and the decadence which ended in the war had already set in—Grimshaw was the last of the "pomegranate school," the first of the bolder, more sinister futurists. A frank hedonist. An intellectual voluptuary. He set the pace, and a whole tribe of idolaters and imitators panted at his heels. They copied his yellow waistcoats, his chrysanthemums, his eye-glass, his bellow. Nice young men, otherwise sane, let their hair grow long like their idol's and professed themselves unbelievers. Unbelievers in what? God save us! Ten years later most of them were wading through the mud of Flanders, believing something pretty definite——

One night I was called to the telephone by the Grimshaws' physician. I'll tell you his name, because he has a lot to do with the rest of the story—Doctor Waram, Douglas Waram—an Australian.

"Grimshaw has murdered a man," he said briefly. "I want you to help me. Come to Cheyne Walk. Take a cab. Hurry."

Of course I went, with a very clear vision of the future of Dagmar, Lady Cooper, to occupy my thoughts during that lurching drive through the slippery streets. I knew that she was at Broadenham, holding up her head in seclusion.

Grimshaw's house was one of a row of red brick buildings not far from the river. Doctor Waram himself opened the door to me.

"I say, this is an awful mess," he said, in a shocked voice. "The woman sent for me—Levenson, that actress. There's some mystery. A man dead—his head knocked in. And Grimshaw sound asleep. It may be hysterical, but I can't wake him. Have a look before I get the police."

I followed him into the studio, the famous Pompeian room, on the second floor. I shall never forget the frozen immobility of the three actors in the tragedy. Esther Levenson, wrapped in peacock-blue scarves, stood upright before the black mantel, her hands crossed on her breast. Cecil Grimshaw was lying full length on a brick-red satin couch, his head thrown back, his eyes closed. The dead man sprawled on the floor, face down, between them. Two lamps made of sapphire glass swung from the gilded ceiling. . . . Bowls of perfumed, waxen flowers. A silver statuette of a nude girl. A tessellated floor strewn with rugs. Orange trees in tubs. Cigarette smoke hanging motionless in the still, overheated air. . . .

I stooped over the dead man. "Who is he?"

"Tucker. Leading man in 'The Sunken City.' Look at Grimshaw, will you? We mustn't be too long——"

I went to the poet. The inevitable monocle was still caught and held by the yellow thatch of his thick brow. He was breathing slowly.

"Grimshaw," I said, touching his forehead, "open your eyes."

He did so, and I was startled by the expression of de-

spair in their depths. "Ah," he said, "it's the psychopathologist."

"How did this happen?"

He sat up—I am convinced that he had been faking that drunken sleep—and stared at the sprawling figure on the floor. "Tucker quarrelled with me," he said. "I knocked him down and his forehead struck against the table. Then he crawled over here and died. From fright, d'you think?" He shuddered. "Take him away, Waram, will you? I've got work to do."

Suddenly Esther Levenson spoke in a flat voice, without emotion: "It isn't true! He struck him with that silver statuette. Like this——" She made a violent gesture with both arms. "And before God in heaven, I'll make him pay for it. I will! I will! I will!"

"Keep still," I said sharply.

Grimshaw looked up at her. He made a gesture of surrender. Then he smiled. "Simonetta," he said, "you are no better than the rest."

She sobbed, ran over to him, and went down on her knees, twisting her arms about his waist. There was a look of distaste in Grimshaw's eyes; he stared into her distraught face a moment, then he freed himself from her arms and got to his feet.

"I think I'll telephone to Dagmar," he said.

But Waram shook his head. "I'll do that. I'm sorry, Grimshaw; the police will have to know. While we're waiting for them, you might write a letter to Mrs. Grimshaw. I'll see that she gets it in the morning."

I don't remember whether the poet wrote to Dagmar then or not. But surely you remember how she stayed by him during the trial—still Victorian in her black gown and veil, mourning for the hope that was dead, at least! You remember his imprisonment; the bitter invective of his enemies; the defection of his followers; the dark scandals that filled the newspapers, offended public taste, and destroyed Cecil Grimshaw's popularity in an England that had worshipped him!

Esther Levenson lied to save him. That was the strangest thing of all. She denied what she had told us that night of the tragedy. Tucker, she said, had been in love with her; he followed her to Grimshaw's house in Chelsea and quarrelled

violently with the poet. His death was an accident. Grimshaw had not touched the statuette. When he saw what had happened, he telephoned to Doctor Waram and then lay down on the couch—apparently fainted there, for he did not speak until Doctor Fenton came. Waram perjured himself, too—for Dagmar's sake. He had not, he swore, heard the actress speak of a silver statuette, or of revenge before God. . . . And since there was nothing to prove how the blow had been struck, save the deep dent in Tucker's forehead, Grimshaw was set free.

He had been a year in prison. He drove away from the jail in a cab with Doctor Waram, and when the crowd saw that he was wearing the old symbol—a yellow chrysanthemum—a hiss went up that was like a geyser of contempt and ridicule. Grimshaw's pallid face flushed. But he lifted his hat and smiled into the host of faces as the cab jerked forward.

He went at once to Broadenham. Years later, Waram told me about the meeting between those two—the centaur and the milk-white doe! Dagmar received him standing and she remained standing all during the interview. She had put aside her mourning for a dress made of some clear blue stuff, and Waram said that as she stood in the breakfast room, with a sun-flooded window behind her, she was very lovely indeed.

Grimshaw held out his hands, but she ignored them. Then Grimshaw smiled and shrugged his shoulders and said: "I have made two discoveries this past year: That conventionalized religion is the most shocking evil of our day, and that you, my wife, are in love with Doctor Waram."

Dagmar held her ground. There was in her eyes a look of inevitable security. She was mistress of the house, proprietor of the land, conscious of tradition, prerogative, position. The man she faced had nothing except his tortured imagination. For the first time in her life she was in a position to hurt him. So she looked away from him to Waram and confirmed his discovery with a smile full of pride and happiness.

"My dear fellow," Grimshaw shouted, clapping Waram on the back, "I'm confoundedly pleased! We'll arrange a divorce for Dagmar. Good heaven, she deserves a decent future. I'm not the sort for her. I hate the things she cares most about. And now I'm done for in England. Just to make it look conventional—nice, Victorian, *English*, you un-

derstand—you and I can go off to the Continent together while Dagmar's getting rid of me. There'll be no trouble about that. I'm properly dished. Besides, I want freedom. A new life. Beauty, without having to buck this confounded distrust of beauty. Sensation, without being ashamed of sensation. I want to drop out of sight. Reform? No! I am being honest."

So they went off together, as friendly as you please, to France. Waram was still thinking of Dagmar; Grimshaw was thinking only of himself. He swaggered up and down the Paris boulevards showing his tombstone teeth and staring at the women. "The Europeans admire me," he said to Waram. "May England go to the devil." He groaned. "I despise respectability, my dear Waram. You and Dagmar are well rid of me. I see I'm offending you here in Paris—you look nauseated most of the time. Let's go on to Switzerland and climb mountains."

Waram *was* nauseated. They went to Salvan and there a curious thing happened.

They were walking one afternoon along the road to Martigny. The valley was full of shadows like a deep green cup of purple wine. High above them the mountains were tipped with flame. Grimshaw walked slowly—he was a man of great physical laziness—slashing his cane at the tasselled tips of the crowding larches. Once, when a herd of little goats trotted by, he stood aside and laughed uproariously, and the goatherd's dog, bristling, snapped in passing at his legs.

Waram was silent, full of bitterness and disgust. They went on again, and well down the springlike coils of the descent of Martigny they came upon the body of a man—one of those wandering vendors of pocket-knives and key-rings, scissors and cheap watches. He lay on his back on a low bank by the roadside. His hat had rolled off into a pool of muddy water. Doctor Waram saw, as he bent down to stare at the face, that the fellow looked like Grimshaw. Not exactly, of course. The nose was coarser—it had not that Wellington spring at the bridge, nor the curved nostrils. But it might have been a dirty, unshaven, dead Grimshaw lying there. Waram told me that he felt a shock of gratification before he heard the poet's voice behind him: "What's this? A drunkard?" He shook his head and opened the dead man's

shirt to feel for any possible flutter of life in the heart. There was none. And he thought: "If this were only Grimshaw! If the whole miserable business were only done with."

"By Jove!" Grimshaw said. "The chap looks like me! I thought I was the ugliest man in the world. I know better . . . D'you suppose he's German, or Lombardian? His hands are warm. He must have been alive when the goat-herd passed just now. Nothing you can do?"

Waram stayed where he was, on his knees. He tore his eyes away from the grotesque dead face and fixed them on Grimshaw. He told me that the force of his desire must have spoken in that look because Grimshaw started and stepped back a pace, gripping his cane. Then he laughed. "Why not?" he said. "Let this be me. And I'll go on, with that clanking hardware store around my neck. It can be done, can't it? Better for you and for Dagmar. I'm not being philanthropic. I'm looking, not for a reprieve, but for release. No one knows this fellow in Salvan—he probably came up from the Rhone and was on his way to Chamonix. What d'you think was the matter with him?"

"Heart," Doctor Waram answered.

"Well, what d'you say? This pedlar and I are social outcasts. And there is Dagmar in England, weeping her eyes out because of divorce courts and more public washing of dirty linen. You love her. I don't! Why not carry this fellow to the *rochers*, to-night after dark? To-morrow, when I have changed clothes with him, we can throw him into the valley. It's a good thousand feet or more. Would there be much left of that face, for purposes of identification? I think not. You can take the mutilated body back to England and I can go on to Chamonix, as he would have gone." Grimshaw touched the pedlar with his foot. "Free."

That is exactly what they did. The body, hidden near the roadside until nightfall, was carried through the woods to the *rochers du soir*, that little plateau on the brink of the tremendous wall of rock which rises from the Rhone valley to the heights near Salvan. There the two men left it and returned to their hotel to sleep.

In the morning they set out, taking care that the proprietor of the hotel and the professional guide who hung about the village should know that they were going to attempt the de-

scent of the "wall" to the valley. The proprietor shook his head and said: "*Bonne chance, messieurs!*" The guide, letting his small blue eyes rest for a moment on Grimshaw's slow-moving hulk, advised them gravely to take the road. "The tall gentleman will not arrive," he remarked.

"Nonsense," Grimshaw answered.

They went off together, laughing. Grimshaw was wearing his conspicuous climbing clothes—tweed jacket, yellow suède waistcoat, knickerbockers, and high-laced boots with hob-nailed soles. His green felt hat, tipped at an angle, was ornamented with a little orange feather. He was in tremendous spirits. He bellowed, made faces at scared peasant children in the village, swung his stick. They stopped at a barber shop in the place and those famous hyacinthine locks were clipped. Waram insisted upon this, he told me, because the pedlar's hair was fairly short and they had to establish some sort of a tonsorial alibi. When the floor of the little shop was thick with the sheared "petals," Grimshaw shook his head, brushed off his shoulders, and smiled. "It took twenty years to create that visible personality—and behold, a Swiss barber destroys it in twenty minutes! I am no longer a living poet. I am already an immortal—half-way up the flowery slopes of Olympus, impatient to go the rest of the way.

"Shall we be off?"

"By all means," Waram said.

They found the body where they had hidden it the night before, and in the shelter of a little grove of larches Grimshaw stripped and then reclothed himself in the pedlar's coarse and soiled under-linen, the worn corduroy trousers, the flannel shirt, short coat, and old black velvet hat. Waram was astounded by the beauty and strength of Grimshaw's body. Like the pedlar, he was blonde-skinned, thin-waisted, broad of back.

Grimshaw shuddered as he helped to clothe the dead pedlar in his own fashionable garments. "Death," he said. "Ugh! How ugly. How terrifying. How abominable."

They carried the body across the plateau. The height where they stood was touched by the sun, but the valley below was still immersed in shadow, a broad purple shadow threaded by the shining Rhone.

"Well?" Waram demanded. "Are you eager to die? For this means death for you, you know."

"A living death," Grimshaw said. He glanced down at the replica of himself. A convulsive shudder passed through him from head to foot; his face twisted; his eyes dilated. He made a strong effort to control himself and whispered: "I understand. Go ahead. Do it. I can't. It is like destroying me myself. . . . I can't. Do it——"

Waram lifted the dead body and pushed it over the edge. Grimshaw, trembling violently, watched it fall. I think, from what Doctor Waram told me many years later, that the poet must have suffered the violence and terror of that plummet drop, must have felt the tearing clutch of pointed rocks in the wall face, must have known the leaping upward of the earth, the whine of wind in his bursting ears, the dizzy spinning, the rending, obliterating impact at last. . . .

The pedlar lay in the valley. Grimshaw stood on the brink of the "wall." He turned, and saw Doctor Waram walking quickly away across the plateau without a backward glance. They had agreed that Waram was to return at once to the village and report the death of "his friend, Mr. Grimshaw." The body, they knew, would be crushed beyond recognition—a bruised and broken fragment, like enough to Cecil Grimshaw to pass whatever examination would be given it. Grimshaw himself was to go through the wood to the highroad, then on to Finhaut and Chamonix and into France. He was never again to write to Dagmar, to return to England, or to claim his English property. . . .

Can you imagine his feelings—deprived of his arrogant personality, his fame, his very identity, clothed in another man's dirty garments, wearing about his neck a clattering pedlar's outfit, upon his feet the clumsy boots of a peasant? Grimshaw—the exquisite futurist, the daffodil, apostle of the æsthetic!

He stood for a moment looking after Douglas Waram. Once, in a panic, he called. But Waram disappeared between the larches, without, apparently, having heard. Grimshaw wavered, unable to decide upon the way to the highroad. He could not shake off a sense of loneliness and terror, as if he himself had gone whirling down to his death. Like a man who comes slowly back from the effects of ether, he

perceived, one by one, the familiar aspects of the landscape—the delicate flowers powdering the plateau, the tasselled larches on the slope, the lofty snow-peaks still suffused with rosy morning light. This, then, was the world. This clumsy being, moving slowly toward the forest, was himself—not Cecil Grimshaw but another man. His mind sought clumsily for a name. Pierre—no, not Pierre; too commonplace! Was he still fastidious? No. Then Pierre, by all means! Pierre Pilleux. That would do. Pilleux. A name suggestive of a good amiable fellow, honest and slow. When he got down into France he would change his identity again—grow a beard, buy some decent clothes. A boulevardier . . . gay, perverse, witty. . . . The thought delighted him and he hurried through the forest, anxious to pass through Salvan before Doctor Waram got there. He felt extraordinarily light and exhilarated now, intoxicated, vibrant. His spirit soared; almost he heard the rushing of his old self forward toward some unrecognizable and beautiful freedom.

When he struck the road the sun was high and it was very hot. Little spirals of dust kicked up at his heels. He was not afraid of recognition. Happening to glance at his hands, he became aware of their whiteness, and stooping, rubbed them in the dust.

Then a strange thing happened. Another herd of goats trotted down from the grassy slopes and spilled into the roadway. And another dog with lolling tongue and wagging tail wove in and out, shepherding the little beasts. They eddied about Grimshaw, brushing against him, their moonstone eyes full of a vague terror of that barking guardian at their heels. The dog drove them ahead, circled, and with a low whine came back to Grimshaw, leaping up to lick his hand.

Grimshaw winced, for he had never had success with animals. Then, with a sudden change of mood, he stooped and caressed the dog's head.

"A good fellow," he said in French to the goatherd.

The goatherd looked at him curiously. "Not always," he answered. "He is an unpleasant beast with most strangers. For you, he seems to have taken a fancy. . . . What have you got there—any two-bladed knives?"

Grimshaw started and recovered himself with: "Knives. Yes. All sorts."

The goatherd fingered his collection, trying the blades on his broad thumb.

"You come from France," he said.

Grimshaw nodded. "From Lyons."

"I thought so. You speak French like a gentleman."

Grimshaw shrugged. "That is usual in Lyons."

The peasant paid for the knife he fancied, placing two francs in the poet's palm. Then he whistled to the dog and set off after his flock. But the dog, whining and trembling, followed Grimshaw, and would not be shaken off until Grimshaw had pelted him with small stones. I think the poet was strangely flattered by this encounter. He passed through Salvan with his head in the air, challenging recognition. But there was no recognition. The guide who had said "The tall monsieur will not arrive" now greeted him with a fraternal: "How is trade?"

"Very good, thanks," Grimshaw said.

Beyond the village he quickened his pace, and easing the load on his back by putting his hands under the leather straps, he swung toward Finhaut. Behind him he heard the faint ringing of the church bells in Salvan. Waram had reported the "tragedy." Grimshaw could fancy the excitement—the priest hurrying toward the "wall" with his crucifix in his hands; the barber, a-quiver with morbid excitement; the stolid guide, not at all surprised, rather gratified, preparing to make the descent to recover the body of that "tall monsieur" who had, after all, "arrived." The telegraph wires were already humming with the message. In a few hours Dagmar would know.

He laughed aloud. The white road spun beneath him. His hands, pressed against his body by the weight of the leather straps, were hot and wet; he could feel the loud beating of his heart.

His senses were acute; he had never before felt with such gratification the warmth of the sun or known the ecstasy of motion. He saw every flower in the roadbank, every small glacial brook, every new conformation of the snow clouds hanging above the ragged peaks of the Argentières. He sniffed with delight the pungent wind from off the glaciers,

the short, warm puffs of grass-scented air from the fields in the Valley of Trient. He noticed the flight of birds, the lazy swinging of pine boughs, the rainbow spray of waterfalls. Once he shouted and ran, mad with exuberance. Again he flung himself down by the roadside and, lying on his back, sang outrageous songs and laughed and slapped his breast with both hands.

That night he came to Chamonix and got lodging in a small hotel on the skirts of the town. His spirits fell when he entered the room. He put his pedlar's pack on the floor and sat down on the narrow bed, suddenly conscious of an enormous fatigue. His feet burned, his legs ached, his back was raw where the heavy pack had rested. He thought: "What am I doing here? I have nothing but the few hundred pounds Waram gave me. I'm alone. Dead and alive."

He scarcely looked up when the door opened and a young girl came in, carrying a pitcher of water and a coarse towel. She hesitated and said rather prettily: "You'll be tired, perhaps?"

Grimshaw felt within him the tug of the old personality. He stared at her, suddenly conscious that she was a woman and that she was smiling at him. Charming, in her way. Bare arms. A little black bodice laced over a white waist. Straight blonde hair, braided thickly and twisted around her head. A peasant, but pretty. . . . You see, his desire was to frighten her, as he most certainly would have frightened her had he been true to Cecil Grimshaw. But the impulse passed, leaving him sick and ashamed. He heard her saying: "A sad thing occurred to-day down the valley. A gentleman. . . . Salvan . . . a very famous gentleman. . . . And they have telegraphed his wife. . . . I heard it from Simon Ravanel. . . . It seems that the gentleman was smashed to bits—*brisé en morceau*. *Épouvantable, n'est ce pas?*"

Grimshaw began to tremble. "Yes, yes," he said irritably. "But I am tired, little one. Go out, and shut the door!"

The girl gave him a startled glance, frightened at last, but for nothing more than the lost look in his eyes. He raised his arms, and she fled with a little scream.

Grimshaw sat for a moment staring at the door. Then

with a violent gesture he threw himself back on the bed, buried his face in the dirty pillow and wept as a child weeps, until, just before dawn, he fell asleep. . . .

As far as the public knows, Cecil Grimshaw perished on the "wall"—perished and was buried at Broadenham beneath a pyramid of chrysanthemums. Perished, and became an English immortal—his sins erased by his unconscious sacrifice. Perished, and was forgiven by Dagmar. Yet hers was the victory—he belonged to her at last. She had not buried his body at Broadenham, but she had buried his work there. He could never write again. . . .

During those days of posthumous whitewashing he read the papers with a certain contemptuous eagerness. Some of them he crumpled between his hands and threw away. He hated his own image, staring balefully from the first page of the illustrated reviews. He despised England for honouring him. Once, happening upon a volume of the "Vision of Helen"—the first edition illustrated by Beardsley—in a book-stall at Aix-les-Bains, he read it from cover to cover.

"Poor stuff," he said to the bookseller, tossing it down again. "Give me 'Arsène Lupin'." And he paid two sous for a paper-covered, dog-eared, much-thumbed copy of the famous detective story, not because he intended to read it, but in payment for his hour of disillusionment. Then he slung his pack over his shoulders and tramped out into the country. He laughed aloud at the thought of Helen and her idolaters. A poetic hoax. Overripe words. Seductive sounds. Nonsense!

"Surely I can do better than that to-day," he thought.

He saw two children working in a field, and called to them.

"If you will give me a cup of cold water," he said, "I'll tell you a story."

"Gladly, monsieur."

The boy put down his spade, went to a brook which threaded the field and came back with an earthenware jug full to the brim. The little girl stared gravely at Grimshaw while he drank. Grimshaw wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"What story shall it be?" he demanded.

The little girl said quickly: "The black king and the white princess and the beast who lived in the wood."

"Not that one," the boy cried. "Tell us about a battle."

"I will sing about life," Grimshaw said.

It was hot in the field. A warm, sweet smell rose from the spaded earth and near by the brook rustled through the grass like a beautiful silver serpent. Grimshaw sat cross-legged on the ground and words spun from his lips—simple words. And he sang of things he had recently learned—the gaiety of birds, the strength of his arms, the scent of dusk, the fine crystal of a young moon, wind in a field of wheat. . . .

At first the children listened. Then, because he talked so long, the little girl leaned slowly over against his shoulder and fell asleep, while the boy fingered the knives, jangled the key-rings, clipped grass stalks with the scissors, and wound the watches one after the other. The sun was low before Grimshaw left them. "When you are grown up," he said, "remember that Pierre Pilleux sang to you of life."

"*Oui, monsieur*," the boy said politely. "But I should like a watch."

Grimshaw shook his head. "The song is enough."

Thereafter he sang to any one who would listen to him. I say that he sang—I mean, of course, that he spoke his verses; it was a minstrel's simple improvisation. But there are people in the villages of southern France who still recall that ungainly, shambling figure. He had grown a beard; it crinkled thickly, hiding his mouth and chin. He laughed a great deal. He was not altogether clean. And he slept wherever he could find a bed—in farmhouses, cheap hotels, haylofts, tables, open fields. Waram's few hundred pounds were gone. The poet lived by his wits and his gift of song. And for the first time in his remembrance he was happy.

Then one day he read in *Le Matin* that Ada Rubenstein was to play "The Labyrinth" in Paris. Grimshaw was in Poitiers. He borrowed three hundred francs from the proprietor of a small café in the Rue Carnot, left his pack as security, and went to Paris. Can you imagine him in the theatre—it was the Odéon, I believe—conscious of curious, amused glances—a peasant, bulking conspicuously in that scented auditorium?

When the curtain rose, he felt again the familiar pain of creation. A rush of hot blood surged around his heart. His temples throbbed. His eyes filled with tears. Then the

flood receded and left him trembling with weakness. He sat through the rest of the performance without emotion of any sort. He felt no resentment, no curiosity.

This was the last time he showed any interest in his old existence. He went back to Poitiers, and then took to the road again. People who saw him at that time have said that there was always a pack of dogs at his heels. Once a fashionable spaniel followed him out of Lyons and he was arrested for theft. You understand, he never made any effort to attract the little fellows—they joined on, as it were, for the journey. And it was a queer fact that after a few miles they always whined, as if they were disappointed about something, and turned back. . . .

He finally heard that Dagmar had married Waram. She had waited a decent interval—Victorian to the end! A man who happened to be in Marseilles at the time told me that “that vagabond poet, Pilleux, appeared in one of the cafés, roaring drunk, and recited a marriage poem—obscene, vicious, terrific. A crowd came in from the street to listen. Some of them laughed. Others were frightened. He was an ugly brute—well over six feet tall, with a blonde beard, a hooked nose, and a pair of eyes that saw beyond reality. He was fascinating. He could turn his eloquence off and on like a tap. He sat in a drunken stupor, glaring at the crowd, until someone shouted: “*Eh bien, Pilleux*—you were saying?” Then the deluge! He had a peasant’s acceptance of the elemental facts of life—it was raw, that hymn of his! The women of the streets who had crowded into the café listened with a sort of terror; they admired him. One of them said: “Pilleux’s wife betrayed him.” He lifted his glass and drank. “No, *ma petite*,” he said politely, “she buried me.”

That night his pack was stolen from him. He was too drunk to know or to care. They say that he went from café to café, paying for wine with verse, and getting it, too! At his heels a crowd of loafers, frowsy women and dogs. His hat gone. His eyes mad. A trickle of wine through his beard. Bellowing. Bellowing again—the untamed centaur cheated of the doe!

And now, perhaps, I can get back to the reasons for this story. And I am almost at the end of it. . . .

In the most obscure alley in Marseilles there is a café frequented by sailors, riff-raff from the waterfront and thieves. Grimshaw appeared there at midnight. A woman clung to his arm. She had no eyes for any one else. Her name, I believe, was Marie—a very humble Magdalen of that tragic back-water of civilization. Putting her cheek against Grimshaw's arm, she listened to him with a curious patience, as one listens to the eloquence of the sea.

"This is no place for thee," he said to her. "Leave me now, *ma petite*."

But she laughed and went with him. Imagine that room—foul air, sanded floor, kerosene lamps, an odour of bad wine, tobacco, and stale humanity. Grimshaw pushed his way to a table and sat down with a surly Gascon and an enormous Negro from some American ship in the harbour.

They brought the poet wine but he did not drink it—sat staring at the smoky ceiling, assailed by a sudden sharp vision of Dagmar and Waram at Broadenham, alone together for the first time, perhaps on the terrace in the starlight, perhaps in Dagmar's bright room which had always been scented, warm, remote——

He had been reciting, of course, in French. Now he broke abruptly into English. No one but the American Negro understood. The proprietor shouted: "Hi, there, Pilleux—no gibberish!" The woman, her eyes on Grimshaw's face, said warningly: "Ssh! He speaks English. He is clever, this poet! Pay attention." And the Negro, startled, jerked his drunken body straight and listened.

I don't know what Grimshaw said. It must have been a poem of home, the bitter longing of an exile for familiar things. At any rate, the Negro was touched—he was a Louisianian, a son of New Orleans. He saw the gentleman, where you and I, perhaps, would have seen only a maudlin savage. There is no other explanation for the thing that happened. . . .

The Gascon, it seems, hated poetry. He tipped over Grimshaw's glass, spilling the wine into the woman's lap. She leaped back, trembling with rage, swearing in the manner of her kind.

"Quiet," Grimshaw said. And her fury receded before his glance; she melted, acquiesced, smiled. Then Grimshaw

smiled, too, and putting the glass to rights with a leisurely gesture, said, "Cabbage. Son of pig," and flipped the dregs into the Gascon's face.

The fellow groaned and leaped. Grimshaw didn't stir—he was too drunk to protect himself. But the Negro saw what was in the Gascon's hand. He kicked back his chair, stretched out his arms—too late. The Gascon's knife, intended for Grimshaw, sliced into his heart. He coughed, looked at the man he had saved with a strange questioning, and collapsed.

Grimshaw was sobered instantly. They say that he broke the Gascon's arm before the crowd could separate them. Then he knelt down by the dying Negro, turned him gently over and lifted him in his arms, supporting that ugly bullet head against his knee. The Negro coughed again, and whispered: "I saw it comin', boss." Grimshaw said simply: "Thank you."

"I'm scared, boss."

"That's all right. I'll see you through."

"I'm dyin', boss."

"Is it hard?"

"Yessir."

"Hold my hand. That's right. Nothing to be afraid of."

The Negro's eyes fixed themselves on Grimshaw's face—a sombre look came into their depths. "I'm goin', boss."

Grimshaw lifted him again. As he did so, he was conscious of feeling faint and dizzy. The Negro's blood was warm on his hands and wrists, but it was not wholly that—He had a sensation of rushing forward; of pressure against his ear-drums; a violent nausea; the crowd of curious faces blurred, disappeared—he was drowning in a noisy darkness. . . . He gasped, struggled, struck out with his arms, shouted, went down in that suffocating flood of unconsciousness. . . .

Opening his eyes after an indeterminate interval, he found himself in the street. The air was cool after the fetid staleness of that room. He was still holding the Negro's hand. And above them the stars burned, remote and calm, like beacon lamps in a dark harbour. . . .

The Negro whimpered: "I don't know the way, boss. I'm lost."

"Where is your ship?"

"In the *Vieux Port*, near the fort."

They walked together through the silent streets. I say that they walked. It was rather that Grimshaw found himself on the quay, the Negro still at his side. A few prowling sailors passed them. But for the most part the waterfront was deserted. The ships lay side by side—an intricate tangle of bowsprits and rigging, masts and chains. Around them the water was black as basalt, only that now and again a spark of light was struck by the faint lifting of the current against the immovable hulls.

The Negro shuffled forward, peering. A lantern flashed on one of the big schooners. Looking up, Grimshaw saw the name: "*Anne Beebe, New Orleans.*" A querulous voice, somewhere on the deck, demanded: "That you, Richardson?" And then, angrily: "This damned place—dark as hell. . . . Who's there?"

Grimshaw answered: "One of your crew."

The man on deck stared down at the quay a moment. Then, apparently having seen nothing, he turned away, and the lantern bobbed aft like a drifting ember. The Negro moaned. Holding both hands over the deep wound in his breast, he slowly climbed the side ladder, turned once, to look at Grimshaw, and disappeared. . . .

Grimshaw felt again the rushing darkness. Again he struggled. And again, opening his eyes after a moment of blankness, he found himself kneeling on the sanded floor of the café, holding the dead Negro in his arms. He glanced down at the face, astounded by the look of placid satisfaction in those wide-open eyes, the smile of recognition, of gratification, of some nameless and magnificent content. . . .

The woman Marie touched his shoulder. "The fellow's dead, *m'sieur*. We had better go."

Grimshaw followed her into the street. He noticed that there were no stars. A bitter wind, forerunner of the implacable *mistral*, had come up. The door of the café slammed behind them, muffling a sudden uproar of voices that had burst out with his going. . . .

Grimshaw had a room somewhere in the Old Town; he went there, followed by the woman. He thought: "I am mad! Mad!" He was frightened, not by what had hap-

pened to him, but because he could not understand. Nor can I make it clear to you, since no explanation is final when we are dealing with the inexplicable. . . .

When they reached his room, Marie lighted the kerosene lamp and, smoothing down her black hair with both hands, said simply: "I stay with you."

"You must not," Grimshaw answered.

"I love you," she said. "You are a great man. *C'est ça*. That is that! Besides, I must love someone—I mean, do for someone. You think that I like pleasure. Ah! Perhaps. I am young. But my heart follows you. I stay here."

Grimshaw stared at her without hearing. "I opened the door. I went beyond. . . . I am perhaps mad. Perhaps privileged. Perhaps what they have always called me—an incorrigible poet." Suddenly he jumped to his feet and shouted: "I went a little way with his soul! Victory! Eternity!"

The woman Marie put her hands on his shoulders and pushed him back into his chair again. She thought, of course, that he was drunk. So she attempted a simple seduction, striving to call attention to herself by the coquetties of her kind. Grimshaw pushed her aside and lay down on the bed with his arms crossed over his eyes. Had he witnessed a soul's first uncertain steps into a new state? One thing he knew—he had himself suffered the confusion of death, and had shared the desperate struggle to penetrate the barrier between the mortal and the immortal, the known and the unknown, the real and the incomprehensible. With that realization, he stepped finally out of his personality into that of the mystic philosopher, Pierre Pilleux. He heard the woman Marie saying: "Let me stay. I am unhappy." And without opening his eyes, simply making a brief gesture, he said: "*Eh bien*." And she stayed.

She never left him again. In the years that followed, wherever Grimshaw was, there also was Marie—little, swarthy, broad of cheek and hip, unimaginative, faithful. She had a passion for service. She cooked for Grimshaw, knitted woollen socks for him, brushed and mended his clothes, watched out for his health—often, I am convinced, she stole for him. As for Grimshaw, he didn't know that she existed,

beyond the fact that she was there and that she made material existence endurable. He never again knew physical love. That I am sure of, for I have talked with Marie. "He was good to me," she said. "But he never loved me." And I believe her.

That night of the Negro's death Grimshaw stood in a wilderness of his own. He emerged from it a believer in life after death. He preached this belief in the slums of Marseilles. It began to be said of him that his presence made death easy, that the touch of his hand steadied those who were about to die. Feverish, terrified, reluctant, they became suddenly calm, wistful, and passed quietly as one falls asleep. "Send for Pierre Pilleux" became a familiar phrase in the Old Town.

I do not believe that he could have touched these simple people had he not looked the part of prophet and saint. The old Grimshaw was gone. In his place an emaciated fanatic, unconscious of appetite, unaware of self, with burning eyes and tangled beard! That finished ugliness turned spiritual—a self-flagellated æsthete. He claimed that he could enter the shadowy confines of the "next world." Not heaven. Not hell. A neutral ground between the familiar earth and an inexplicable territory of the spirit. Here, he said, the dead suffered bewilderment; they remembered, desired, and regretted the life they had just left, without understanding what lay ahead. So far he could go with them. So far and no farther. . . .

Personal immortality is the most alluring hope ever dangled before humanity. All of us secretly desire it. None of us really believe in it. As you say, all of us are afraid and some of us laugh to hide our fear. Grimshaw wasn't afraid. Nor did he laugh. He *knew*. And you remember his eloquence—seductive words, poignant, delicious, memorable words! In his Chelsea days, he had made you sultry with hate. Now, as Pierre Pilleux, he made you believe in the shining beauty of the indestructible, the unconquerable dead. You saw them, a host of familiar figures, walking fearlessly away from you toward the brightness of a distant horizon. You heard them, murmuring together, as they passed out of sight, going forward to share the common and ineffable experience.

Well. . . . The pagan had disappeared in the psy-

chic! Cecil Grimshaw's melancholy and pessimism, his love of power, his delight in cruelty, in beauty, in the erotic, the violent, the strange, had vanished! Pierre Pilleux was a humanitarian. Cecil Grimshaw never had been. Grimshaw had revolted against ugliness as a dilettante objects to the mediocre in art. Pierre Pilleux was conscious of social ugliness. Having become aware of it, he was a potent rebel. He began to write in French, spreading his revolutionary doctrine of facile spiritual reward. He splintered purgatory into fragments; what he offered was an earthly paradise—humanity given eternal absolution, freed of fear, prejudice, hatred—above all, of fear—and certain of endless life.

Now that we have entered the cosmic era, we look back at him with understanding. Then, he was a radical and an atheist.

Of course he had followers—seekers after eternity who drank his promises like thirsty wanderers come upon a spring in the desert. To some of them he was a god. To some, a mystic. To some, a healer. To some—and they were the ones who finally controlled his destiny—he was simply a dangerous lunatic.

Two women in Marseilles committed suicide—they were followers, disciples, whatever you choose to call them. At any rate, they believed that where it was so simple a matter to die, it was foolish to stay on in a world that had treated them badly. One had lost a son, the other a lover. One shot herself; the other drowned herself in the canal. And both of them left letters addressed to Pilleux—enough to damn him in the eyes of authority. He was told that he might leave France, or take the consequences—a mild enough warning, but it worked. He dared not provoke an inquiry into his past. So he shipped on board a small Mediterranean steamer as fireman, and disappeared, no one knew where.

Two years later he reappeared in Africa. Marie was with him. They were living in a small town on the rim of the desert near Biskra. Grimshaw occupied a native house—a mere hovel, flat-roofed, sun-baked, bare as a hermit's cell. Marie had hired herself out as *femme de chambre* in the only hotel in the place. "I watched over him," she told me. "And believe me, *monsieur*, he needed care! He was thin as a ghost. He had starved more than once during those two

years. He told me to go back to France, to seek happiness for myself. But for me happiness was with him. I laughed and stayed. I loved him—magnificently, *monsieur*."

Grimshaw was writing again—in French—and his work began to appear in the Parisian journals, a strange poetic prose impregnated with mysticism. It was Grimshaw, sublimated. I saw it myself, although at that time I had not heard Waram's story. The French critics saw it. "This Pilleux is as picturesque as the English poet, Grimshaw. The style is identical." Waram saw it. He read everything that Pilleux wrote—with eagerness, with terror. Finally, driven by curiosity, he went to Paris, got Pilleux's address from the editor of *Gil Blas*, and started for Africa.

Grimshaw is a misty figure at the last. You see him faintly—an exile, racially featureless, wearing a dirty white native robe, his face wrinkled by exposure to the sun, his eyes burning. Marie says that he prowled about the village at night, whispering to himself, his head thrown back, pointing his beard at the stars. He wrote in the cool hours before dawn, and later, when the village quivered in heat fumes and he slept, Marie posted what he had written to Paris.

One day he took her head between his hands and said very gently: "Why don't you get a lover? Take life while you can."

"You say there is eternal life," she protested.

"*N'en doutez-pas!* But you must be rich in knowledge. Put flowers in your hair. And place your palms against a lover's palms and kiss him with generosity, *ma petite*. I am not a man; I am a shadow."

Marie slipped her arms around him and, standing on tiptoe, put her lips against his. "*Je t'aime*," she said simply.

His eyes deepened. There flashed into them the old, mad humour, the old vitality, the old passion for beauty. The look faded, leaving his eyes "like flames that are quenched." Marie shivered, covered her face with her hands, and ran out. "There was no blood in him," she told me. "He was like a spirit—a ghost. So meagre! So wan! Waxen hands. Yellow flesh. And those eyes, in which, *monsieur*, the flame was quenched!"

And this is the end of the curious story. . . . Waram went to Biskra and from there to the village where Grimshaw

lived. Grimshaw saw him in the street one evening and followed him to the hotel. He lingered outside until Waram had registered at the *bureau* and had gone to his room. Then he went in and sent word that "Pierre Pilleux was below and ready to see Doctor Waram."

He waited in the "garden" at the back of the hotel. No one was about. A cat slept on the wall. Overhead the arch of the sky was flooded with orange light. Dust lay on the leaves of the potted plants and bushes. It was breathless, hot, quiet. He thought: "Waram has come because Dagmar is dead. Or the public has found me out!"

Waram came immediately. He stood in the doorway a moment, staring at the grotesque figure which faced him. He made a terrified gesture, as if he would shut out what he saw. Then he came into the garden, steadying himself by holding on to the backs of the little iron garden chairs. The poet saw that Waram had not changed so very much—a little gray hair in that thick, black mop, a few wrinkles, a rather stodgy look about the waist. No more. He was still Waram, neat, self-satisfied, essentially English. . . . Grimshaw strangled a feeling of aversion and said quietly: "Well, Waram. How d'you do? I call myself Pilleux now."

Waram ignored his hand. Leaning heavily on one of the chairs, he stared with a passionate intentness. "Grimshaw?" he said at last.

"Why, yes," Grimshaw answered. "Didn't you know?"

Waram licked his lips. In a whisper he said: "I killed you in Switzerland six years ago. Killed you, you understand."

Grimshaw touched his breast with both hands. "You lie.

"Here I am."

"You are dead."

"Dead?"

"Before God, I swear it."

"Dead?"

Grimshaw felt once more the on-rushing flood of darkness. His thoughts flashed back over the years. The "wall." His suffering. The dog. The song in the field. The Negro. The door that opened. The stars. His own flesh, fading into spirit, into shadows. . . .

"Dead?" he demanded again.

Waram's eyes wavered. He laughed unsteadily and looked behind him. "Strange," he said. "I thought I saw——" He turned and went quickly across the garden into the hotel. Grimshaw called once, in a loud voice: "Waram!" But the doctor did not even turn his head. Grimshaw followed him, overtook him, touched his shoulder. Waram paid no attention. Going to the *bureau* he said to the proprietor: "You told me that a Monsieur Pilleux wished to see me."

"*Oui, monsieur.* He was waiting for you in the garden."

"He is not there now."

"But just a moment ago——"

"I am *here*," Grimshaw interrupted.

The proprietor brushed past Waram and peered into the garden. It was twilight out there now. The cat still slept on the wall. Dust on the leaves. Stillness. . . .

"I'm sorry, *monsieur.* He seems to have disappeared."

Doctor Waram straightened his shoulders. "Ah," he said. "Disappeared. Exactly." And passing Grimshaw without a glance he went upstairs.

Grimshaw spoke to the proprietor. But the little man bent over the desk, and began to write in an account book. His pen went on scratching, inscribing large, flourishing numbers in a neat column. . . .

Grimshaw shrugged and went into the street. The crowds paid no attention to him—but then, they never had. A dog sniffed at his heels, whined, and thrust a cold nose into his hand.

He went to his house. "I'll ask Marie," he thought. . . . She was sitting before a mirror, her hands clasped under her chin, smiling at herself. . . . She had put a flower in her hair. Her lips were parted. She smiled at some secret thought. Grimshaw watched her a moment; then with a leap of his heart he touched her shoulder. And she did not turn, did not move. . . .

He knew! He put his fingers on her cheek, her neck, the shining braids of her coarse black hair. Then he walked quickly out of the house, out of the village, toward the desert.

Two men joined him. One of them said: "I have just died." They went on together, their feet whispering in the sand, walking in a globe of darkness until the stars came out—then they saw one another's pale faces and eager, frightened

eyes. Others joined them. And others. Men. Women. A child. Some wept and some murmured and some laughed.

"Is this death?"

"Where now, brother?"

Grimshaw thought: "The end. What next? Beauty. Love. Illusion. Forgetfulness."

He clasped his hands behind his back, lifted his face to the stars, walked steadily forward with that company of the dead, into the desert, out of the story at last.

COMET¹

By SAMUEL A. DERIEUX

From American Magazine

NO PUPPY ever came into the world under more favourable conditions than Comet. He was descended from a famous family of pointers. Both his mother and father were champions. Before he opened his eyes, while he was still crawling about over his brothers and sisters, blind as puppies are at birth, Jim Thompson, Mr. Devant's kennel master, picked him out.

"That's the best un in the bunch."

When he was only three weeks old he pointed a butterfly that lit in the yard in front of his nose.

"Come here, Molly," yelled Jim to his wife. "Pointed—the little cuss!"

When Thompson started taking the growing pups out of the yard, into the fields to the side of the Devants' great southern winter home, Oak Knob, it was Comet who strayed farthest from the man's protecting care. And when Jim taught them all to follow when he said "Heel," to drop when he said "Drop," and to stand stock-still when he said "Ho," he learned far more quickly than the others.

At six months he set his first covey of quail, and remained perfectly staunch. "He's goin' to make a great dog," said Thompson. Everything—size, muscle, nose, intelligence, earnestness—pointed to the same conclusion. Comet was one of the favoured of the gods.

One day, after the leaves had turned red and brown and the mornings grown chilly, a crowd of people, strangers to him, arrived at Oak Knob. Then out of the house with Thompson came a big man in tweed clothes, and the two walked straight

¹Published originally under title, "The Comet."

to the curious young dogs, who were watching them with shining eyes and wagging tails.

"Well, Thompson," said the big man, "which is the future champion you've been writing me about?"

"Pick him out for yourself, sir," said Thompson confidently.

After that they talked a long time planning for the future of Comet. His yard training was now over (Thompson was only yard trainer), and he must be sent to a man experienced in training and handling for field trials.

"Larsen's the man to bring him out," said the big man in tweeds, who was George Devant himself. "I saw his dogs work in the Canadian Derby."

Thompson spoke hesitatingly, apologetically, as if he hated to bring the matter up. "Mr. Devant, . . . you remember, sir, a long time ago Larsen sued us for old Ben."

"Yes, Thompson; I remember, now that you speak of it."

"Well, you remember the court decided against him, which was the only thing it could do, for Larsen didn't have any more right to that dog than the Sultan of Turkey. But, Mr. Devant, I was there, and I saw Larsen's face when the case went against him."

Devant looked keenly at Thompson.

"Another thing, Mr. Devant," Thompson went on, still hesitatingly; "Larsen had a chance to get hold of this breed of pointers and lost out, because he dickered too long, and acted cheesy. Now they've turned out to be famous. Some men never forget a thing like that. Larsen's been talkin' these pointers down ever since, sir."

"Go on," said Devant.

"I know Larsen's a good trainer. But it'll mean a long trip for the young dog to where he lives. Now, there's an old trainer lives near here, Wade Swygert. There never was a straighter man than him. He used to train dogs in England."

Devant smiled. "Thompson, I admire your loyalty to your friends; but I don't think much of your business sense. We'll turn over some of the others to Swygert, if he wants 'em. Comet must have the best. I'll write Larsen to-night, Thompson. To-morrow, crate Comet and send him off."

Just as no dog ever came into the world under more favour-

able auspices, so no dog ever had a bigger "send-off" than Comet. Even the ladies of the house came out to exclaim over him, and Marian Devant, pretty, eighteen, and a sports-woman, stooped down, caught his head between her hands, looked into his fine eyes, and wished him "Good luck, old man." In the living-room the men laughingly drank toasts to his future, and from the high-columned portico Marian Devant waved him good-bye, as in his clean padded crate he was driven off, a bewildered youngster, to the station.

Two days and two nights he travelled, and at noon of the third day, at a lonely railroad station in a prairie country that rolled like a heavy sea, he was lifted, crate and all, off the train. A lean, pale-eyed, sanctimonious-looking man came toward him.

"Some beauty that, Mr. Larsen," said the agent as he helped Larsen's man lift the crate onto a small truck.

"Yes," drawled Larsen in a meditative voice, "pretty enough to look at—but he looks scared—er—timid."

"Of course he's scared," said the agent; "so would you be if they was to put you in some kind of a whale of a balloon an' ship you in a crate to Mars."

The station agent poked his hands through the slats and patted the head. Comet was grateful for that, because everything was strange. He had not whined nor complained on the trip, but his heart had pounded fast, and he had been homesick.

And everything continued to be strange: the treeless country through which he was driven, the bald house and huge barns where he was lifted out, the dogs that crowded about him when he was turned into the kennel yard. These eyed him with enmity and walked round and round him. But he stood his ground staunchly for a youngster, returning fierce look for fierce look, growl for growl, until the man called him away and chained him to a kennel.

For days Comet remained chained, a stranger in a strange land. Each time at the click of the gate announcing Larson's entrance he sprang to his feet from force of habit, and stared hungrily at the man for the light he was accustomed to see in human eyes. But with just a glance at him the man would turn one or more of the other dogs loose and ride off to train them.

But he was not without friends of his own kind. Now and then another young dog (he alone was chained up) would stroll his way with wagging tail, or lie down near by, in that strange bond of sympathy that is not confined to man. Then Comet would feel better and would want to play, for he was still half puppy. Sometimes he would pick up a stick and shake it, and his partner would catch the other end. They would tug and growl with mock ferocity, and then lie down and look at each other curiously.

If any attention had been paid him by Larsen, Comet would have quickly overcome his feeling of strangeness. He was no milksop. He was like an overgrown boy, off at college or in some foreign city. He was sensitive, and not sure of himself. Had Larsen gained his confidence, it would all have been different. And as for Larsen—he knew that perfectly well.

One fine sunny afternoon Larsen entered the yard, came straight to him, and turned him loose. In the exuberance of his spirits he ran round and round the yard, barking in the faces of his friends. Larsen let him out, mounted a horse, and commanded him to heel. He obeyed with wagging tail.

A mile or more down the road Larsen turned off into the fields. Across his saddle was something the young pointer had had no experience with—a gun. That part of his education Thompson had neglected, at least put off, for he had not expected that Comet would be sent away so soon. That was where Thompson had made a mistake.

At the command "Hi on" the young pointer ran eagerly around the horse, and looked up into the man's face to be sure he had heard aright. At something he saw there the tail and ears drooped momentarily, and there came over him again a feeling of strangeness, almost of dismay. Larsen's eyes were mere slits of blue glass, and his mouth was set in a thin line.

At a second command, though, he galloped off swiftly, boldly. Round and round an extensive field of straw he circled, forgetting any feeling of strangeness now, every fibre of his being intent on the hunt, while Larsen, sitting on his horse, watched him with appraising eyes.

Suddenly there came to Comet's nose the smell of game birds, strong, pungent, compelling. He stiffened into an earn-

est, beautiful point. Heretofore in the little training he had had Thompson had come up behind him, flushed the birds, and made him drop. And now Larsen, having quickly dismounted and tied his horse, came up behind him, just as Thompson had done, except that in Larsen's hand was the gun.

The old-fashioned black powder of a generation ago makes a loud explosion. It sounds like a cannon compared with the modern smokeless powder now used by all hunters. Perhaps it was only an accident that had caused Larsen before he left the house to load his pump gun with black powder shells.

As for Comet he only knew that the birds rose; then above his head burst an awful roar, almost splitting his tender eardrums, shocking every sensitive nerve, filling him with terror such as he had never felt before. Even then, in the confusion and horror of the surprise, he turned to the man, head ringing, eyes dilated. A single reassuring word, and he would have steadied. As for Larsen, though, he declared afterward (to others and to himself even) that he noticed no nervousness in the dog; that he was only intent on getting several birds for breakfast.

Twice, three times, four times, the pump gun bellowed in its cannon-like roar, piercing the eardrums, shattering the nerves. Comet turned; one more glance backward at a face, strange, exultant—and then the puppy in him conquered. Tail tucked, he ran away from that shattering noise.

Miles he ran. Now and then, stumbling over briars, he yelped. Not once did he look back. His tail was tucked, his eyes crazy with fear. Seeing a house, he made for that. It was the noon hour, and a group of farm hands was gathered in the yard. One of them, with a cry "Mad dog!" ran into the house after a gun. When he came out, they told him the dog was under the porch. And so he was. Pressed against the wall, in the darkness, the magnificent young pointer with the quivering soul waited, panting, eyes gleaming, the horror still ringing in his ears.

Here Larsen found him that afternoon. A boy crawled underneath the porch and dragged him out. He, who had started life favoured of the gods, who that morning even had been full of high spirits, who had circled a field like a cham-

pion, was now a cringing, shaking creature, like a homeless cur.

And thus it happened that Comet came home, in disgrace—a gun-shy dog, a coward, expelled from college, not for some youthful prank, but because he was—yellow. And he knew he was disgraced. He saw it in the face of the big man, Devant, who looked at him in the yard where he had spent his happy puppyhood, then turned away. He knew it because of what he saw in the face of Jim Thompson.

In the house was a long and plausible letter, explaining how it happened:

I did everything I could. I never was as surprised in my life. The dog's hopeless.

As for the other inhabitants of the big house, their minds were full of the events of the season: de luxe hunting parties, more society events than hunts; lunches in the woods served by uniformed butlers; launch rides up the river; arriving and departing guests. Only one of them, except Devant himself, gave the gun-shy dog a thought. Marian Devant came out to visit him in his disgrace. She stooped before him as she had done on that other and happier day, and again caught his head between her hands. But his eyes did not meet hers, for in his dim way he knew he was not now what he had been.

"I don't believe he's yellow—inside!" she declared, looking up at Thompson, her cheeks flushed.

Thompson shook his head.

"I tried him with a gun, Miss Marian," he declared. "I just showed it to him, and he ran into his kennel."

"I'll go get mine. He won't run from me."

But at sight of her small gun it all came back. Again he seemed to hear the explosion that had shattered his nerves. The Terror had entered his very soul. In spite of her pleading, he made for his kennel. Even the girl turned away from him now. And as he lay panting in the shelter of his kennel he knew that never again would men look at him as they had looked, or life be sweet to him as it had been.

Then there came to Oak Knob an old man to see Thompson. He had been on many seas, he had fought in a dozen wars, and had settled at last on a little truck farm near by.

Somewhere, in his life full of adventure and odd jobs, he had trained dogs and horses. His face was lined and seamed, his hair was white, his eyes piercing, blue and kind. Wade Swygert was his name.

"There's been dirty work," he said, when he looked at the dog. "I'll take him if you're goin' to give him away."

Give him away—who had been Championship hope!

Marian Devant came out and looked into the face of the old man, shrewdly, understandingly.

"Can you cure him?" she demanded.

"I doubt it, miss," was the sturdy answer.

"You will try?"

The blue eyes lighted up. "Yes, I'll try."

"Then you can have him. And—if there's any expense——"

"Come, Comet," said the old man.

That night, in a neat, humble house, Comet ate supper placed before him by a stout old woman, who had followed this old man to the ends of the world. That night he slept before their fire. Next day he followed the old man all about the place. Several days and nights passed this way, then, while he lay before the fire, old Swygert came in with a gun. At sight of it Comet sprang to his feet. He tried to rush out of the room, but the doors were closed. Finally, he crawled under the bed.

Every night after that Swygert got out the gun, until he crawled under the bed no more. Finally, one day the man fastened the dog to a tree in the yard, then came out with a gun. A sparrow lit in a tree, and he shot it. Comet tried to break the rope. All his panic had returned; but the report had not shattered him as that other did, for the gun was loaded light.

After that, frequently the old man shot a bird in his sight, loading the gun more and more heavily, and each time after the shot coming to him, showing him the bird, and speaking to him kindly, gently. But for all that the Terror remained in his heart.

One afternoon the girl, accompanied by a young man, rode over on horseback, dismounted, and came in. She always stopped when she was riding by.

"It's mighty slow business," old Swygert reported; "I don't know whether I'm makin' any headway or not."

That night old Mrs. Swygert told him she thought he had better give it up. It wasn't worth the time and worry. The dog was just yellow.

Swygert pondered a long time. "When I was a kid," he said at last, "there came up a terrible thunderstorm. It was in South America. I was water boy for a railroad gang, and the storm drove us in a shack. While lightnin' was hittin' all around, one of the grown men told me it always picked out boys with red hair. My hair was red, an' I was little and ignorant. For years I was skeered of lightnin'. I never have quite got over it. But no man ever said I was yellow."

Again he was silent for a while. Then he went on: "I don't seem to be makin' much headway, I admit that. I'm lettin' him run away as far as he can. Now I've got to shoot an' make him come toward the gun himself, right while I'm shootin' it."

Next day Comet was tied up and fasted, and next, until he was gaunt and famished. Then, on the afternoon of the third day, Mrs. Swygert, at her husband's direction, placed before him, within reach of his chain, some raw beefsteak. As he started for it, Swygert shot. He drew back, panting, then, hunger getting the better of him, started again. Again Swygert shot.

After that for days Comet "Ate to music," as Swygert expressed it. "Now," he said, "he's got to come toward the gun when he's not even tied up."

Not far from Swygert's house is a small pond, and on one side the banks are perpendicular. Toward this pond the old man, with the gun under his arm and the dog following, went. Here in the silence of the woods, with just the two of them together, was to be a final test.

On the shelving bank Swygert picked up a stick and tossed it into the middle of the pond with the command to "fetch." Comet sprang eagerly in and retrieved it. Twice this was repeated. But the third time, as the dog approached the shore, Swygert picked up the gun and fired.

Quickly the dog dropped the stick, then turned and swam toward the other shore. Here, so precipitous were the banks, he could not get a foothold. He turned once more and struck out diagonally across the pond. Swygert met him and fired.

Over and over it happened. Each time, after he fired, the

old man stooped down with extended hand and begged him to come on. His face was grim now, and, though the day was cool, sweat stood out on his brow. "You'll face the music," he said, "or you'll drown. Better be dead than called yellow."

The dog was growing weary now. His head was barely above water. His efforts to clamber up the opposite bank were feeble, frantic. Yet, each time as he drew near the shore Swygert fired.

He was not using light loads now. He was using the regular load of the bird hunter. Time had passed for temporizing. The sweat was standing out all over his face. The sternness in his eyes was terrible to see, for it was the sternness of a man who is suffering.

A dog can swim a long time. The sun dropped over the trees. Still the firing went on, regularly, like a minute gun.

Just before the sun set an exhausted dog staggered toward an old man almost as exhausted as he. The dog had been too near death and was too faint to care now for the gun that was being fired over his head. On and on he came, toward the man, disregarding the noise of the gun. It would not hurt him, that he knew at last. He might have many enemies, but the gun, in the hands of this man, was not one of them. Suddenly old Swygert sank down and took the dripping dog in his arms.

"Old boy," he said, "old boy."

That night Comet lay before the fire, and looked straight into the eyes of a man, as he used to look in the old days.

Next season Larsen, glancing over his sporting papers, was astonished to see that among promising Derbys the fall trials had called forth was a pointer named Comet. He would have thought it some other dog than the one who had disappointed him so by turning out gun-shy, in spite of all his efforts to prevent, had it not been for the fact that the entry was booked as: "Comet; owner, Miss Marian Devant; handler, Wade Swygert."

Next year he was still more astonished to see in the same paper that Comet, handled by Swygert, had won first place in a Western trial, and was prominently spoken of as a National Championship possibility. As for him, he had no young entries to offer, but was staking everything on the National Championship, where he was to enter Larsen's Peerless II.

It was strange how things fell out—but things have a habit of turning out strangely in field trials, as well as elsewhere. When Larsen reached the town where the National Championship was to be run, there on the street, straining at the leash held by old Swygert, whom he used to know, was a seasoned young pointer, with a white body, a brown head, and a brown saddle spot—the same pointer he had seen two years before turn tail and run in that terror a dog never quite overcomes.

But the strangest thing of all happened that night at the drawing, when, according to the slips taken at random from a hat, it was declared that on the following Wednesday Comet, the pointer, was to run with Peerless II.

It gave Larsen a strange thrill, this announcement. He left the meeting and went straightway to his room. There for a long time he sat pondering. Next day at a hardware store he bought some black powder and some shells.

The race was to be run next day, and that night in his room he loaded half-a-dozen shells. It would have been a study in faces to watch him as he bent over his work, on his lips a smile. Into the shells he packed all the powder they could stand, all the powder his trusted gun could stand, without bursting. It was a load big enough to kill a bear, to bring down a buffalo. It was a load that would echo and reëcho in the hills.

On the morning that Larsen walked out in front of the judges and the field, Peerless II at the leash, old Swygert, with Comet at his side, he glanced around at the "field," or spectators. Among them was a handsome young woman, and with her, to his amazement, George Devant. He could not help chuckling inside himself as he thought of what would happen that day, for once a gun-shy dog, always a gun-shy dog—that was *his* experience.

As for Comet, he faced the straw fields eagerly, confidently, already a veteran. Long ago fear of the gun had left him, for the most part. There were times when at a report above his head he still trembled, and the shocked nerves in his ear gave a twinge like that of a bad tooth. But always at the quiet voice of the old man, his god, he grew steady, and remained staunch.

Some disturbing memory did start within him to-day as he

glanced at the man with the other dog. It seemed to him as if in another and an evil world he had seen that face. His heart began to pound fast, and his tail drooped for a moment. Within an hour it was all to come back to him—the terror, the panic, the agony of that far-away time.

He looked up at old Swygert, who was his god, and to whom his soul belonged, though he was booked as the property of Miss Marian Devant. Of the arrangements he could know nothing, being a dog. Old Swygert, having cured him, could not meet the expenses of taking him to field trials. The girl had come to the old man's assistance, an assistance which he had accepted only under condition that the dog should be entered as hers, with himself as handler.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" the judges asked.

"Ready," said Larsen and old Swygert.

And Comet and Peerless II were speeding away across that field, and behind them came handlers, and judges and spectators, all mounted.

It was a race people still talk about, and for a reason, for strange things happened that day. At first there was nothing unusual. It was like any other field trial. Comet found birds, and Swygert, his handler, flushed them and shot. Comet remained steady. Then Peerless II found a covey, and Larsen flushed them and shot. And so for an hour it went.

Then Comet disappeared, and old Swygert, riding hard and looking for him, went out of sight over a hill. But Comet had not gone far. As a matter of fact, he was near by, hidden in some high straw, pointing a covey of birds. One of the spectators spied him, and called the judges' attention to him. Everybody, including Larsen, rode up to him, but still Swygert had not come back.

They called him, but the old man was a little deaf. Some of the men rode to the top of the hill but could not see him. In his zeal he had got a considerable distance away. Meanwhile, here was his dog, pointed.

If any one had looked at Larsen's face he would have seen the exultation there, for now his chance had come—the very chance he had been looking for. It's a courtesy one handler sometimes extends another who is absent from the spot, to go in and flush his dog's birds.

"I'll handle this covey for Mr. Swygert," said Larsen to the judges, his voice smooth and plausible, on his face a smile.

And thus it happened that Comet faced his supreme ordeal without the steadying voice of his god.

He only knew that ahead of him were birds, and that behind him a man was coming through the straw, and that behind the man a crowd of people on horseback were watching him. He had become used to that, but when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw the face of the advancing man, his soul began to tremble.

"Call your dog in, Mr. Larsen," directed the judge. "Make him backstand."

Only a moment was lost, while Peerless, a young dog himself, came running in and at a command from Larsen stopped in his tracks behind Comet, and pointed. Larsen's dogs always obeyed, quickly, mechanically. Without ever gaining their confidence, Larsen had a way of turning them into finished field-trial dogs. They obeyed, because they were afraid not to.

According to the rules the man handling the dog has to shoot as the birds rise. This is done in order to test the dog's steadiness when a gun is fired over him. No specification is made as to the size of the shotgun to be used. Usually, however, small-gauge guns are carried. The one in Larsen's hands was a twelve gauge, and consequently large.

All morning he had been using it over his own dog. Nobody had paid any attention to it, because he shot smokeless powder. But now, as he advanced, he reached into the left-hand pocket of his hunting coat, where six shells rattled as he hurried along. Two of these he took out and rammed into the barrels.

As for Comet, still standing rigid, statuesque, he heard, as has been said, the brush of steps through the straw, glimpsed a face, and trembled. But only for a moment. Then he steadied, head high, tail straight out. The birds rose with a whirl—and then was repeated that horror of his youth. Above his ears, ears that would always be tender, broke a great roar. Either because of his excitement, or because of a sudden wave of revenge, or of a determination to make sure of the dog's flight, Larsen had pulled both triggers at once. The combined report shattered through the dog's eardrums,

it shivered through his nerves, he sank in agony into the straw.

Then the old impulse to flee was upon him, and he sprang to his feet, and looked about wildly. But from somewhere in that crowd behind him came to his tingling ears a voice—clear, ringing, deep, the voice of a woman—a woman he knew—pleading as his master used to plead, calling on him not to run, but to stand.

“Steady,” it said. “Steady, Comet!”

It called him to himself, it soothed him, it calmed him, and he turned and looked toward the crowd. With the roar of the shotgun the usual order observed in field trials was broken up. All rules seemed to have been suspended. Ordinarily, no one belonging to “the field” is allowed to speak to a dog. Yet the girl had spoken to him. Ordinarily, the spectators must remain in the rear of the judges. Yet one of the judges had himself wheeled his horse about and was galloping off, and Marian Devant had pushed through the crowd and was riding toward the bewildered dog.

He stood staunch where he was, though in his ears was still a throbbing pain, and though all about him was this growing confusion he could not understand. The man he feared was running across the field yonder, in the direction taken by the judge. He was blowing his whistle as he ran. Through the crowd, his face terrible to see, his own master was coming. Both the old man and the girl had dismounted now, and were running toward him.

“I heard,” old Swygert was saying to her. “I heard it! I might ‘a’ known! I might ‘a’ known!”

“He stood,” she panted, “like a rock—oh, the brave, beautiful thing!”

“Where is that——” Swygert suddenly checked himself and looked around.

A man in the crowd (they had all gathered about now), laughed.

“He’s gone after his dog,” he said. “Peerless has run away!”

FIFTY-TWO WEEKS FOR FLORETTE

By ELIZABETH ALEXANDER HEERMANN*

IT HAD been over two months since Freddy Le Fay's bill had been paid, and Miss Nellie Blair was worried. She had written to Freddy's mother repeatedly, but there had been no answer.

"It's all your own fault, sister. You should never have taken Freddy," Miss Eva said sharply. "I told you so at the time, when I saw his mother's hair. And of course Le Fay is not her real name. It looks to me like a clear case of desertion."

"I can't believe it. She seemed so devoted," faltered Miss Nellie.

"Oh, a girl like that!" Miss Eva sniffed. "You should never have consented."

"Well, the poor thing was so worried, and if it meant saving a child from a dreadful life——"

"There are other schools more suitable."

"But, sister, she seemed to have her heart set on ours. She begged me to make a little gentleman out of him."

"As if you could ever do that!"

"Why not?" asked Mary, their niece.

"That dreadful child!"

"Freddy isn't dreadful!" cried Mary hotly.

"With that atrocious slang! Won't eat his oatmeal! And he's such a queer child—queer! So pale, never laughs, doesn't like any one. Why should you take up for him? He doesn't even like you. Hates me, I suppose."

"It's because we are so different from the women he has known," said Mary.

*Elizabeth Alexander in *Saturday Evening Post*, August 13, 1921.

"I should hope so! Well, sister, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know what to do," sighed Miss Nellie. "He hasn't any other relatives as far as I know. And the summer coming on, what shall we do?"

"Nothing for it but to send him to an orphanage if she doesn't write soon," said Miss Eva.

"Oh, auntie, you wouldn't!"

"Why not? How can we afford to give children free board and education?"

"It's only one child."

"It would be a dozen, if we once started it."

"I'll wait another month," said Miss Nellie, "and then, really, something will have to be done."

The girl looked out of the window.

"There he is now," she said, "sitting on the stone wall at the end of the garden. It's his favourite spot."

"What on earth he wants to sit there for—away from all the other children! He never plays. Look at him! Just sitting there—not moving. How stupid!" exclaimed Miss Eva impatiently.

"I do declare, I believe he's fallen asleep," said Miss Nellie.

Freddy was not asleep. He had only to close his eyes and it would all come back to him. Memories that he could not put into words, sensations without definite thought, crowded in upon him. The smell—the thick smell of grease paint, choking powder, dust, gas, old walls, bodies, and breath, and sharp perfume; the sickening, delicious, stale, enchanting, never-to-be-forgotten odour of the theatre; the nerves' sudden tension at the cry of "Ov-a-chure"; their tingling as the jaded music blares; the lift of the heart as the curtain rises; the catch in the throat as Florette runs on to do her turn.

Florette was a performer on the trapeze in vaudeville. Her figure was perfect from the strenuous daily exercise. She was small, young, and a shade too blonde. First she appeared in a sort of blue evening dress, except that it was shorter even than a débutante's. She ran out quickly from the wings, bowed excessively, smiled appealingly, and, skipping over to the trapeze, seized the two iron rings that hung from ropes. Lifting her own weight by the strength in her slender wrists, she flung her legs upward and hooked her knees into the rings.

Then hanging head downward she swung back and forth; flung herself upright again, sat and swung; climbed to the topmost bar of the trapeze and hung down again. Her partner ran on and repeated her monkeylike manœuvres. Then Florette held his hands while he swung upside down; he held Florette while she swung upside down. They turned head over heels, over and over each other, up and down, catching and slipping, and adjusting their balance, in time to gay tunes.

Sometimes the audience clapped. Sometimes they were too familiar with their kind of flirtation with death to clap. Then Florette and her partner would invent something a little more daring. They would learn to balance themselves on chairs tilted on two legs on the trapeze, or Florette would hang by only one hand, or she would support her partner by a strap held in her teeth. Sometimes Florette's risks were great enough to thrill the audience with the thought of death.

The thought of a slip, broken bones, delighted the safe people in comfortable chairs. They laughed. Florette laughed, too, for Freddy was waiting in the wings.

There were mothers in the audience who cooked and mended, swept and dusted, ran up and down innumerable stairs, washed greasy dishes, wore ugly house dresses, slaved and scolded and got chapped hands, all for their children. Florette, always dainty and pretty, had nothing to do but airily, gracefully swing, and smile. Other mothers spent their lives for their little boys. Florette only risked hers twice a day.

While the partner played an accordion Florette ran out for her quick change. Freddy was waiting, with her dress hung over a chair. He flew to meet her. His eager, nimble fingers unfastened the blue frock. He slipped the next costume over her head without mussing a single beloved blonde hair. The second costume was a tight-fitting silver bodice with a fluff of green skirt underneath. Freddy had it fastened up in a twinkling. Florette ran out again and pulled herself up into the trapeze.

While Florette went through the second part of her act Freddy folded up the blue costume and trudged upstairs with it. Florette's dressing room was usually up four flights. Freddy put the blue dress on a coat hanger and wrapped a

muslin cover about it. Then he trudged down the four flights again, with the third costume over his arm. It was a Chinese jacket and a pair of tight, short blue satin trousers, and Freddy was very proud of this confection. He stood as a screen for Florette while she put on the trousers, and there are not many little boys who have a mamma who could look so pretty in them.

Florette skipped out lightly and finished her act by swinging far out over the audience, back and forth, faster and faster, farther and farther out, until it seemed as if she were going to fling herself into the lap of some middle-aged gentleman in the third row. His wife invariably murmured something about a hussy as Florette's pretty bare legs flashed overhead. The music played louder, ended with a boom from the drum. Florette flung herself upright, kissed her hands, the curtain fell, and the barelegged hussy ran up to the dressing room where her little son waited.

Freddy had already hung up and shrouded the silver-and-green costume, and was waiting for the Chinese one. He pounced upon it, muttered about some wrinkles, put it into place, and went to the dressing table to hand Florette the cold cream. He found her make-up towel, all caked with red and blue, which she had flung down on the floor. He patted her highly glittering hair and adjusted a pin. He marshalled the jars and little pans and sticks of grease paint on her shelf into an orderly row and blew off the deep layers of powder she had scattered. Then he took down her street dress from its hook and slipped it deftly over her shoulders and had it buttoned up before Florette could yawn. He handed her her saucy bright hat. He flung himself into his own coat.

"Well, let's go, Florette!" cried Freddy gayly, with dancing eyes. He had never called her mamma. She was too little and cute.

Then they would go to the hotel, never the best, where they were stopping. The room with its greenish light, its soiled lace curtains, the water pitcher always cracked, the bed always lumpy, the sheets always damp, was home to Freddy. Florette made it warm and cozy even when there was no heat in the radiator. She had all sorts of clever home-making tricks. She toasted marshmallows over the gas jet; she spread a shawl on the trunk: or she surprised Freddy by pin-

ning pictures out of the funny page on the wall. She could make the nicest tea on a little alcohol stove she carried in her trunk. There was always a little feast after the theatre on the table that invariably wobbled. Freddy would pretend that the foot of the iron bed was a trapeze. How they laughed. On freezing nights in Maine or Minnesota, Florette would let Freddy warm his feet against hers, or she would get up and spread her coat that looked just like fur over the bed.

When they struck a new town at the beginning of each week Freddy and Florette would go bumming and see all the sights, whether it was Niagara Falls or just the new Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids. Freddy would have been sorry for little boys who had to stay in one home all the time—that is, if he had known anything at all about them. But the life of the strolling player was all that he had ever known, and he found it delightful, except for the dreaded intervals of “bookin’ the ac’.”

The dream of every vaudevillian is to be booked for fifty-two unbroken weeks in the year, but few attain such popularity. Florette’s seasons were sometimes long, sometimes short; but there always came the tedious worrying intervals when managers and agents must be besought for work. Perhaps she would find that people were tired of her old tricks, and she would have to rehearse new ones, or interpolate new songs and gags. Then the new act would be tried out at some obscure vaudeville house, and if it didn’t go the rehearsals and trampings to agents must begin all over again. Freddy shared the anxieties and hardships of these times. But the only hardship he really minded was the loss of Florette, for of course the pretty Miss Le Fay, who was only nineteen on the agents’ books, could not appear on Broadway with a great big boy like Freddy.

However, the bad times always ended, and Florette and Freddy would set out gayly once more for Oshkosh or Atlanta, Dallas or Des Moines. Meals expanded, Florette bought a rhinestone-covered comb, and the two adventurers indulged in an orgy of chocolate drops. With the optimism of the actor, they forgot all about the dismal past weeks, and saw the new tour as never ending.

Freddy felt himself once more a real and important human

being with a place in the sun, not just a child to be shushed by a dingy landlady while his mother was out looking for a job. He knew that he was as necessary a part of Florette's act as her make-up box. He believed himself to be as necessary a part of her life as the heart in her breast, for Florette lavished all her beauty, all her sweetness on him. No Johns for Florette, pretty and blonde though she was. To the contempt of her contemporaries Florette refused every chance for a free meal. Freddy was her sweetheart, her man. She had showered so many pretty love words on him, she had assured him so often that he was all in the world she wanted, that Freddy was stunned one day to hear that he was to have a papa.

"I don' wan' one," said Freddy flatly. "I ain't never had one, an' I ain't got no use for one."

Florette looked cross—an unusual thing.

"Aw, now, Freddy, don't be a grouch," she said.

"I don' wan' one," repeated Freddy.

"You ought to be glad to get a papa!" cried Florette.

"Why?"

"Makes you respectable."

"What's that?"

"Who'd believe I was a widow—in this profession?"

Freddy still looked blank.

"Well," said Florette, "you're goin' to get a nice papa, so there now!"

Then the cruel truth dawned on Freddy. It was Florette who wanted a papa. He had not been enough for her. In some way Florette had found him lacking.

Tactfully, Freddy dropped the subject of papas, wooed Florette, and tried to atone for his shortcomings. He redoubled his compliments, trotted out all the love words he knew, coaxed Florette with everything she liked best in him. He even offered to have his nails filed. At night, in bed, he kissed Florette's bare back between the shoulder blades, and snuggled close to her, hugging her desperately with his little thin arms.

"Flo," he quavered, "you—you ain't lonesome no more, are you?"

"Me? Lonesome? Watcher talkin' about, kid?" sleepily murmured Florette.

"You ain't never lonesome when you got me around, are you, Flo?"

"Sure I ain't. Go to sleep, honey."

"But, Florette——"

Florette was dozing.

"Oh, Florette! Florette!"

"Florette, if you ain't lonesome——"

"Sh-h-h, now, sh-h-h! Le's go to sleep."

"But, Florette, you don' wan'—you don' wan'—a pop——"

"Sh-h-h! Sh-h-h! I'm so tired, honey."

Florette slept. Freddy lay awake, but he lay still so as not to disturb her. His arms ached, but he dared not let her go. Finally he slept, and dreamed of a world in which there was no Florette. He shuddered and kicked his mother. She gave him a little impatient shove. He woke. Day was dawning. It was Florette's wedding day. Freddy did not know it until Florette put on her best coral-velvet hat with the jet things dangling over her ears.

"You ain' gonna wear that hat," said Freddy severely. "It's rainin'."

"Yeah, I'm gonna wear this hat," said Florette, pulling her blonde earbobs into greater prominence. "An' you put on your best suit an' new necktie. We're goin' to a weddin'."

Her tone was gay, arch, her eyes were happy.

"Who—whose?" Freddy faltered.

"Mine!" chirped Florette. "I'm goin' to get you that papa I promised you."

Freddy turned away.

"Sulkin'!" chided Florette. "Naughty, jealous boy!"

The new papa did not appear so formidable as Freddy had expected. In fact, he turned out to be only Howard, Florette's acrobatic partner. Freddy philosophically reflected that if one must have a new papa, far better so to call Howard, who necessarily encroached on Florette's time, than a stranger who might take up some of her leisure hours.

But Freddy received a distinct shock when the new papa joined them after the evening performance and accompanied them up to their room.

Freddy had always regarded Florette's room as his, too. He felt that the new papa was an intruder in their home. Alas! It soon became all too apparent that it was Freddy

who was *de trop*, or, as he would have expressed it, a Mister Buttinski.

They were having a little supper of pickles and cheese and liver sausage and jam. Florette and the papa drank out of a bottle by turns and laughed a great deal. Florette seemed to think the papa very clever and funny. She laughed at everything he said. She looked at him with shining eyes. She squeezed his hand under the table. Freddy tried in vain to attract her attention. Finally he gave up and sat staring at the oblivious couple with a stupid expression.

"That kid's half asleep," said the new papa.

Florette looked at Freddy and was annoyed by his vacant eyes.

"Go to bed right away," she commanded.

Freddy looked at her in amazement.

"Ain't you goin', too, Florette?" he asked.

"No, you go on—go to sleep."

"Git into that nice li'l cot an' go by-by," said the new papa genially.

Freddy had not seen the cot before. It had been moved in during his absence at the theatre, and stood white, narrow, and lonely, partly concealed by a screen.

"I—I always slep' with Florette," faltered Freddy.

This seemed to amuse the new papa. But Florette flushed and looked annoyed.

"Now, Freddy, are you goin' to be a grouch?" she wailed.

Freddy was kissed good-night, and went to sleep in the cot. He found it cold and unfriendly. But habit, the much maligned, is kind as well as cruel; if it can accustom us to evil, so can it soften pain. Freddy was beginning to assume proprietary airs toward the cot, which appeared in every town, and even to express views as to the relative values of cots in Springfield, Akron, or Joliet—when one night he woke to hear Florette sobbing.

Freddy lay awake listening. He had sobbed, too, when he was first banished to the cot. Was Florette missing him as he had missed her? Ah, if she at last had seen that papas were not half so nice as Freddy's, he would not be hard on her. His heart swelled with forgiveness and love. He stole on tiptoe to Florette's bedside.

"Flo," he whispered.

The sobbing ceased. Florette held her breath and pretended to be asleep. Freddy wriggled his little thin body under the covers and threw his arms around Florette. With a gulp, she turned and threw her arms around him. They clasped each other tight and clung without speaking. They lay on the edge of the bed, holding their breath in order not to wake the papa who snored loudly. Freddy's cheeks and hair were wet, a cold tear trickled down his neck, his body ached from the hard edge of the bed; but he was happy, as only a child or a lover can be, and Freddy was both.

In the morning the papa was cross. He did not seem to care for his own breakfast, but concentrated his attention on Freddy's. Freddy had always been accustomed to a nice breakfast of tea and toast and jam, but Howard insisted on ordering oatmeal for him.

"Naw, Freddy can't stand oatmeal," Florette objected.

"It's good for him," said Howard, staring severely at his son across the white-topped restaurant table.

"I don' see no use forcin' a person to eat what they can't stomach," said Florette.

"Yeah, tha's the way you've always spoiled that kid. Look a' them pale cheeks! Li'l ole pale face!" Howard taunted, stretching a teasing hand toward Freddy. "Mamma's boy! Reg'lar sissy, he is!"

He gave Freddy a poke in the ribs. Freddy shrank back, made himself as small as possible in his chair, looked mutely at Florette.

"Aw, cut it out, Howard," she begged. "Quit raggin' the kid, can't you?"

"Mamma's blessed sugar lump!" jeered Howard, with an ugly gleam in his eye. "Ought to wear a bib with pink ribbons, so he ought. Gimme a nursin' bottle for the baby, waiter!"

The impertinence of this person amazed Freddy. He could only look at his tormentor speechlessly. Freddy and Florette had been such great chums that she had never used the maternal prerogative of rudeness. He had never had any home life, so he was unaware of the coolness with which members of a family can insult one another. Howard's tones, never low, were unusually loud this morning, and people turned around to laugh at the blushing child. The

greasy waiter grinned and set the oatmeal which Howard had ordered before Freddy.

"Now, then, young man," commanded Howard sternly, "you eat that, and you eat it quick!"

Freddy obeyed literally, swallowing as fast as he could, with painful gasps and gulps, fighting to keep the tears back. Florette reached under the table and silently squeezed his knee. He flashed her a smile and swallowed a huge slimy mouthful.

"You ain't eatin' nothin' yourse'f, Howard," said Florette acidly. "W'y don' you have some oatmeal?"

"Tha's right!" shouted Howard. "Side with the kid against me! Tha's all the thanks I get for tryin' to make a man out o' the li'l sissy. Oughta known better'n to marry a woman with a spoiled brat."

"Sh-h-h!" whispered Florette. "Don't tell the whole reserunt about your fam'ly troubles."

"Say," hissed Howard, bending down toward her and thrusting out his jaw, "lay off o' me, will yer?"

"Lay off yourse'f!" retorted Florette under her breath. "If you wanna fight le's go back to the hotel where it's private."

"I don' min' tellin' the world I bin stung!" roared Howard.

Florette flushed up to the slightly darker roots of her too-blonde hair.

"You?" she gasped furiously. "After all I've put up with!"

"Say, you ain't got any kick comin'! I treated you white, marryin' you, an' no questions asked."

"What-ta you mean?" breathed Florette, growing deathly pale.

Freddy, alarmed, half rose from his chair.

"Sit down there you!" roared Howard. "What-ta I mean, Miss Innocence?" he said, mimicking Florette's tone. "Oh, no, of course you ain't no idea of what I mean!"

"Come on, Freddy," Florette broke in quickly. "It's a katzenjammer. He ain't got over last night yet."

She seized Freddy's hand and walked rapidly toward the door. Howard lurched after her, followed by the interested stares of the spectators. On the street he caught up with her and the quarrel recommenced.

The act went badly that afternoon. It must be hard to frolic in midair with a heavy heart. Under cover of the gay music there were angry muttered words and reproaches.

"Yoo-hoo! Yoo-hoo!" Florette would trill happily to the audience as she poised on one toe. "What-ta you tryin' to do—shake me off'n the bar?" she would mutter under her breath to her partner.

"That's right! Leggo o' me an' lemme bus' my bean, damn you!" snarled Howard. And to the audience he sang, "Oh, ain't it great to have a little girlie you can trust for—life!"

They were still muttering angrily as they came off. The handclapping had been faint.

"Aw, for God's sake, stop your jawin'!" half screamed Florette. "It ain't no more my fault than it is yours. If they don' like us they don' like us, tha's all."

She ran up the stairs, sobbing. Howard followed her. They shared a dressing room now. It was small, and Freddy was in the way, although he tried to squeeze himself into the corner by the dingy stationary washstand. Howard shoved Freddy. Florette protested. The quarrelling broke out afresh. Howard tipped over a bottle of liquid white. Florette screamed at him, and he raised his fist. Freddy darted out of his corner.

"Say, ya big stiff, cut out that rough stuff, see?" cried little Freddy in the only language of chivalry that he knew.

Howard whirled upon him furiously, calling him a name that Freddy did not understand, but Florette flung herself between them and caught the blow.

"He certainly looks as if he had fallen asleep," Miss Nellie Blair repeated. "Better run out and get him, Mary. He might tumble off the wall."

As Mary went out a maid came in.

"A gen'l'mun to see you, Miss Blair," she announced.

"Is it a parent?" asked Miss Nellie.

The maid's eyebrows twitched, and she looked faintly grieved, as all good servants do when they are forced to consider someone whom they cannot acknowledge as their superior.

"No, ma'am, he doesn't look like a parent," she com-

plained. "He really is a very queer-lookin' sort of person, ma'am. I wouldn't know exactly where to place him. Shall I say you are out, ma'am?"

"Yes," said Miss Eva. "No doubt he wants to sell an encyclopedia."

"No, let him come in," said Miss Nellie. "It might be a reporter about Madame d'Avala," she added, turning to her sister. "Sometimes they look queer."

"If it turns out to be an encyclopedia I shall leave you at once," said Miss Eva. "You are so kind-hearted that you will look through twenty-four volumes, and miss your dinner——"

But the gentleman who came in carried no books, nor did he look like one who had ever been associated with them. Carefully dressed in the very worst of taste from his scarfpin to his boots, he had evidently just been too carefully shaved, for there were scratches on his wide, ludicrous face, and his smile was as rueful as a clown's.

"The Misses Blair, I presume?" he asked in what was unmistakably his society manner, and he held out a card.

Miss Eva took it and read aloud, "Mr. Bert Brannigan, Brannigan and Bowers, Black-Face Comedians."

"Ah?" murmured Miss Nellie, who was always polite even in the most trying circumstances.

But Miss Eva could only stare at the rich brown suit, the lavender tie and matching socks and handkerchief.

"Well?" said Miss Eva.

Mr. Brannigan cleared his throat and looked cautiously about the room. His heavy, clownlike face was troubled.

"Where's the kid?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"What child?" Miss Eva snapped.

"You've come to see one of our pupils?" Miss Nellie faltered.

"Yeah. Hers."

"Hers?"

"W'y, Miss Le Fay's li'l boy."

"Oh, Freddy?"

"Sure! Does he—he don't—you ain't tole 'im yet, have you?"

"Told him what?"

"My God! don't you know?"

Bert Brannigan stared at the ladies, mopping his brow with the lavender handkerchief.

"Please explain yourself, Mr. Brannigan," said Miss Eva.

"She's dead. I thought you knew."

"Miss Le Fay is dead?" gasped Miss Nellie.

"Why weren't we told?" asked Miss Eva.

"It was in the papers," said Bert. "But they didn't give Florette no front-page headlines, an' maybe you don't read the theatrical news."

"No," said Miss Eva.

"Well, not bein' in the profession," Mr. Brannigan said as if he were apologizing for her.

He sat down and continued to mop his brow mechanically. The two sisters stared in dismay at the clown who had brought bad news.

"W'at I don' know is how to tell the kid," said Bert. "He was nutty about Florette; didn't give a darn for no one else. I bin on the bill with them two lots of times, an' I seen how it was. The money ain't goin' to be no comfort to that kid!"

"The money?"

"Florette's insurance—made out to him. Tha's w'y I come. She wan'ed him to stay on here, see, till he was all educated. They's enough, too. She was always insured heavy for the kid. They's some back money comin' to you, too. She tole me. The reason w'y she didn't sen' it on was because she was out of luck an' broke, see?"

"But why didn't Miss Le Fay write to us?" asked Miss Nellie. "If she was in difficulties we——"

"Naw, Florette wasn' that kind; nev' put up any hard-luck story y' un'erstan'. But she'd bin outa work, sick. An' w'en she come back it looked like her ac' was a frost. I run up on her in K. C., an'——"

"What is K. C.?"

"Why, Kansas City! We was on the bill there two weeks ago. Me an' Florette was ole friends, see? No foolishness, if you know what I mean. I'm a married man myse'f—Bowers there on the card's my wife—but me an' Florette met about five years ago, an' kep' on runnin' on to one another on the bill, first one place an' then another. So she was glad to see me again, an' me her. 'W'y, w'ere's Freddy?' I says,

first thing. An' then I never seen any person's face look so sad. But she begun tellin' me right off w'at a fine place the kid was at, an' how the theayter wasn't no place for a chile. An' she says, 'Bert, I wan' him to stay w'ere he's happy an' safe,' she says. 'Even if I nev' see him again,' she says. Well, it give me the shivers then. Psychic, I guess."

Bert paused, staring into space.

"And then?" Miss Nellie asked gently.

"Well, like I was tellin' you, Florette had been playin' in hard luck. Now I don' know whether you ladies know anything about the vodvil game. Some ac's is booked out through the circuit from N' Yawk; others is booked up by some li'l fly-by-night agent, gettin' a date here an' a date there, terrible jumps between stands, see?—and nev' knowin' one week where you're goin' the nex', or whether at all. Well, Florette was gettin' her bookin' that way. An' on that you gotta make good with each house you play, get me? An' somethin' had went wrong with the ac' since I seen it las'. It useter be A Number 1, y' un'erstan', but looked like Florette had lost int'rust or somethin'. She didn't put no pep into it, if you know what I mean. An' vodvil's gotta be all pep. Then, too, her an' that partner of hers jawin' all the time somethin' fierce. I could hear him raggin' her that af'noon, an' mestandin' in the wings, an' they slipped up on some of their tricks terrible, an' the audience laughed. But not with 'em, at 'em, y' un'erstan'! Well, so the ac' was a fros', an' they was cancelled."

"Cancelled?"

"Fired, I guess you'd call it. They was to play again that night an' then move on, see?"

"Oh, yes."

"An' they didn't have no bookin' ahead. Florette come an' talked to me again, an' she says again she wanted Freddy to be happy, an' git a better start'n she'd had an' all. 'An', Bert,' she says, 'if anything ev' happens to me, you go an' give 'um the money for Freddy,' she says."

"Poor thing! Perhaps she had a premonition of her death," murmured Miss Nellie.

Bert gave her a queer look.

"Yeah—yes, ma'am, p'raps so. I was watchin' her from the wings that night," he went on. "The ac' was almos'

over, an' I couldn't see nothin' wrong. Howard had run off an' Florette was standin' up on the trapeze kissin' her han's like she always done at the finish. But all of a sudden she sort of trem'led an' turned ha'f way roun' like she couldn't make up her min' what to do, an' los' her balance, an' caught holt of a rope—an' let go—an' fell."

Miss Nellie covered her face with her hands. Miss Eva turned away to the window.

"She was dead w'en I got to her," said Bert.

"Be careful!" said Miss Eva sharply. "The child is coming in."

"Freddy wasn't asleep at all," said Mary, opening the door. "He was just playing a game, but he won't tell me—Oh, I beg your pardon! I didn't know any one was here."

Freddy had stopped round-eyed, open-mouthed with incredulous delight.

"Bert!" he gasped. "The son of a gun!"

"Freddy!" cried the Misses Blair.

But Bert held out his arms and Freddy ran into them.

"Gee, Bert, I'm glad to see ya!" rejoiced Freddy.

"Me, too, kid, glad to see you! How's the boy, huh? Gettin' educated, huh? Swell school, ain't it?" babbled Bert, fighting for time.

"Aw, it's all right, I guess," Freddy replied listlessly, glancing at the Misses Blair. Then turning again with eager interest to Bert, "But say, Bert, what in the hell a—— I mean what-ta you doin' here?"

"Why—ah—ah—jus' stoppin' by to say howdy, see, an'——"

"Playin' in N'Yawk?"

"No."

"Jus' come in?"

"Yeah."

Freddy drew his breath in quickly.

"Say, Bert, you—you ain't seen Florette anywheres?"

"Why, ye-yeah."

"Where is she, Bert?"

There was a deathly hush.

Then Miss Eva motioned to Miss Nellie and said, "If you will excuse us, Mr. Brannigan, we have some arrangements to make about the concert to-night. Madame d'Avala is

to sing in the school auditorium, a benefit performance," and she went out, followed by her sister and niece.

"Where's Florette?" Freddy asked again, his voice trembling with eagerness.

"I—seen her in K. C., sonny."

"How's the ac'?"

"Fine! Fine! Great!"

"No kiddin'?"

"No kiddin'."

"Florette—all right?"

"Why, what made you think any different?"

"Who hooks her up now, Bert?"

"She hires the dresser at the theatre."

"I could 'a' kep' on doin' it," said Freddy, with a sigh.

"Aw, now, kid, it's better for you here, gettin' educated an' all."

"I don't like it, Bert."

"You don't like it?"

"Naw."

"You don't like it! After all she done!"

"I hate this ole school. I wanna leave. You tell Florette."

"Aw, now, Freddy——"

"I'm lonesome. I don't like nobody here." His voice dropped. "An'—an' they don't like me."

"Aw, now, Freddy——"

"Maybe Miss Mary does. But Miss Eva don't. Anyway, I ain't no use to anybody here. What's the sense of stayin' where you ain't no use? An' they're always callin' me down. I don't do nothin' right. I can't even talk so's they'll like it. Florette liked the way I talked all right. An' you get what I mean, don't you, Bert? But they don't know nothin'. Why, they don't know nothin', Bert! Why, there's one boy ain't ever been inside a theatre! What-ta you know about that, Bert? Gee, Bert, I'm awful glad you come! I'd 'a' bust not havin' somebody to talk to."

Bert was silent. He still held Freddy in his arms. His heart reeled at the thought of what he must tell the child. He cleared his throat, opened his mouth to speak, but the words would not come.

Freddy chattered on, loosing the flood gates of his accumu-

lated loneliness. He told how Florette had bidden him "learn to be a li'l gem'mum," and how he really tried; but how silly were the rules that governed a gentlemanly existence; how the other li'l gem'mum laughed at him, and talked of things he had never heard of, and never heard of the things he talked of, until at last he had ceased trying to be one of them.

"You tell Florette I gotta leave this place," he concluded firmly. "Bert, now you tell Florette. Will you, Bert? Huh?"

"Freddy—I—— Freddy, lissen now. I got somethin' to tell you."

"What?"

"I—I come on to tell you, Freddy. Tha's why I come out to tell you, see?"

"Well, spit it out," Freddy laughed.

Bert groaned.

"Whassa matter, Bert? What's eatin' you?"

"I—I—— Say, Freddy, lissen—lissen, now, Freddy. I——"

"Florette! She ain't sick? Bert, is Florette sick?"

"No! No, I——"

"You tell me, Bert! If it's bad news about Florette——"

His voice died out. His face grew white. Bert could not meet his eyes.

"No, no, now, Freddy," Bert mumbled, turning away his head. "You got me all wrong. It—it's good news, sonny."

Like a flash Freddy's face cleared.

"What about, Bert? Good news about what?"

"Why—ah—why, the ac's goin' big, like I tole you. An'—an' say, boy, out at one place—out at K. C., it—why, it stopped the show!"

"Stopped the show!" breathed Freddy in awe. "Oh, Bert, we never done that before!"

"An' so—so she—ah, Florette—y'see, kid, account of the ac' goin' so big, why, she—has to—go away—for a little while."

"Go away, Bert! Where?"

"To—to—Englund, an'—Australia."

"To Englund, an'—Australia?"

"Yeah, they booked her up 'count o' the ac' goin' so great."

"Oh, Bert!"

"Yeah. An' lissen. She's booked for fifty-two weeks solid!"

"Fifty-two weeks! Oh, Bert, that ain't never happened to us before!"

"I know. It's—great!"

Bert blew out his breath loudly, mopped his forehead. He could look at Freddy now, and he saw a face all aglow with love and pride.

"When she comin' to get me, Bert?" the child asked confidently.

"Why—why, Freddy—now—you——"

Bert could only flounder and look dismayed.

"She ain't goin' off an' leave me!" wailed the child

"Now, lissen! Say, wait a minute! Lissen!"

"But, Bert! Bert! She——"

"Say, don't you wanna help Florette, now she's got this gran' bookin' an' all?"

"Sure I do, Bert. I wanna he'p her with her quick changes like I useter."

"You he'p her! Say, how would that look in all them swell places she's goin' to? W'y, she'll have a maid!"

"Like the headliners, Bert?"

"Sure!"

"A coon, Bert?"

"Sure! Like a li'l musical com'dy star."

"Honest?"

"Honest!"

"But, Bert, w'y can't I go, too?"

"Aw, now, say—w'y—w'y, you're too big!"

"What-ta y' mean, Bert?"

"W'y, kid, you talk's if you never bin in the p'fession. How ole does Miss Le Fay look? Nineteen, tha's all. But with a great big boy like you taggin' on—— W'y, say, you'd queer her with them English managers right off. You don' wanna do that now, Freddy?"

"No, but I——"

"I knew you'd take it sensible. You always bin a lot of help to Florette."

"Did she tell you, Bert?"

"Sure!"

"A' right. I'll stay. When—when's she comin' to tell me goo'-by?"

"Why—why—look-a-here. Brace up, ole man. She had to leave a'ready."

"She's gone?"

"Say, you don' think bookin' like that can wait, do you? It was take it or leave it—quick. You didn't wan' her to throw away a chancet like that, huh, Freddy? Huh?"

Freddy's head sank on his chest. His hands fell limp. "A' right," he murmured without looking up.

The big man bent over the child clumsily and tried to raise his quivering chin.

"Aw, now, Freddy," he coaxed, "wanna come out with me an'—an' have a soda?"

Freddy shook his head.

"Buy ya some candy, too. Choc'late drops! An' how about one o' them li'l airyplane toys I seen in the window down the street? Huh? Or some marbles? Huh? Freddy, le's go buy out this here dinky li'l ole town. What-ta ya say, huh? Le's paint this li'l ole town red! What-ta ya say, sport?"

Freddy managed a feeble smile.

"How come you so flush, Brudder Johnsing?" he asked in what he considered an imitation of darky talk. "Mus' 'a' bin rollin' dem bones!"

"Tha's a boy!" shouted Bert with a great guffaw. "There's a comeback for you! Game! Tha's what I always liked about you, Freddy. You was always game."

"I wanna be game!" said Freddy, stiffening his lips. "You tell Florette. You write to her I was game. Will ya, Bert?"

A bell rang.

"Aw, I gotta go dress for supper, Bert. They dress up for supper here."

"A' right, kid. Then I'll be goin'——"

"Goo'-by, Bert. You tell her, Bert."

"So long, kid."

"Will ya tell her I was game, Bert?"

"Aw, she'll know!"

Madame Margarita d'Avala found herself in a situation all

the more annoying because it was so absurd. She had promised to sing at the Misses Blair's School for the benefit of a popular charity, and she had motored out from New York, leaving her maid to do some errands and to follow by train. But it was eight o'clock and the great Madame d'Avala found herself alone in the prim guest room of the Misses Blair's School, with her bag and dressing case, to be sure, but with no one to help her into the complicated draperies of her gown. There was no bell. She could not very well run down the corridor, half nude, shouting for help, especially as she had no idea of where the Misses Blair kept either themselves or their servants. The Misses Blair had been so fatiguingly polite on her arrival. Perhaps she had been a little abrupt in refusing their many offers of service and saying that she wanted to rest quite alone. Now, of course, they were afraid to come near her. And, besides, they would think that her maid was with her by this time. They had given orders to have Madame d'Avala's maid shown up to her as soon as she arrived, and of course their maid would be too stupid to know that Madame d'Avala's maid had never come.

Margarita d'Avala bit her lips and paced the floor, looked out of the window, opened the door, but there was no one in sight. Well, no help for it. She must try to get into the gown alone. She stepped into it and became entangled in the lace; stepped out again, shook the dress angrily and pushed it on over her head, giving a little impatient scream as she rumbled her hair. Then she reached up and back, straining her arms to push the top snap of the corsage into place. But with the quiet glee of inanimate things the snap immediately snapped out again. Flushing, Madame d'Avala repeated her performance, and the snap repeated its. Madame d'Avala stamped both feet and gave a little gasp of rage. She attacked the belt with no better luck. Chiffon and lace became entangled in hooks, snaps flew out as fast as she could push them in. Her arms ached, and the dress assumed strange humpy outlines as she fastened it up all wrong.

She would like to rip the cursed thing from her shoulders and tear it into a million pieces! She felt hysteria sweeping over her. She knew that she was going to have one of her famous fits of temper in a minute.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" Madame d'Avala screamed aloud, stamping her feet up and down as fast as they could go. "Oh! Oh! Oh! Dæmn! Damn! Damn!"

She did not swear in Italian, because she was not an Italian except by profession. Her name had been Maggie Davis, but that was a secret between herself and her press agent.

"Oh! Damn!" screamed Madame d'Avala again.

"Ain't it hell?" remarked an interested voice, and Madame d'Avala saw a small pale face staring at her through the door which she had left ajar.

"Come in!" she ordered, and a small thin boy entered, quite unabashed, looking at her with an air of complete understanding.

"Who are you?" asked Madame d'Avala.

"Freddy."

"Well, Freddy, run at once and find a maid for me, please. Mine hasn't come, and I'm frantic, simply frantic. Well, why don't you go?"

"I'll hook you up," said Freddy.

"You!"

"Sure! I kin do it better'n any maid you'd get in this helluva school."

"Why, Freddy!"

"Aw, I heard you sayin' damn! You're in the p'fession, huh? Me, too."

"You, too?"

His face clouded.

"Oh! And now—you have retired?"

"Yeah—learnin' to be a gem'mum. Lemme there," said Freddy, stepping behind Madame d'Avala. "Say, you've got it all started wrong." He attacked the stubborn hooks with light, deft fingers.

"Why, you can really do it!" cried Madame d'Avala.

"Sure! This ain't nothin'." Freddy's fingers flew.

"Careful of that drapery. It's tricky."

"Say, drapery's pie to me. I fastened up lots harder dresses than this."

"Really?"

"Sure! Florette had swell clo'es. This'n's swell, too. My! ain't it great to see a classy gown again!"

Madame d'Avala laughed and Freddy joined her.

"Say, you seen the teachers at this school?" he asked.
"You seen 'em?"

Madame d'Avala nodded.

"Nice ladies," said Freddy in an effort to be fair. "But no class—you know what I mean. Way they slick their hair back, an' no paint or powder. Gee, Florette wouldn't wear their clo'es to a dog fight!"

"Nor I," said Madame d'Avala; "I love dogs."

"I tole Miss Eva she ought to put peroxide in the rinsin' water for her hair like Florette useter, but it made her mad. I b'lieve in a woman fixin' herself up all she can, don't you?" asked Freddy earnestly.

"Indeed, I do! But tell me, who is Florette?"

So Freddy told her all about his mother, and about the good fortune that had come to her.

"Fifty-two weeks solid! Some ac' to get that kinda bookin, huh?" he ended.

"Yes! Oh, yes, indeed!"

"There y'ah now! Look at youse'f! See if it's a'right."

Madame d'Avala turned to the mirror. Her gown fell in serene, lovely folds. It seemed incredible that it was the little demon of a few minutes before.

"Perfect! Freddy, you're a wonder. How can I thank you?"

"Tha's a'right. You're welcome."

He was regarding her with worshipful eyes.

"You're awful pretty," he breathed.

"Thank you," said Madame d'Avala. "Are you coming to my concert?"

"No, they put us to bed!" cried Freddy in disgust. "Puttin' me to bed at 8:30 every night! What-ta y' know about that! Jus' w'en the orchestra would be tunin' up for the evenin' p'formance."

"What a shame! I'd like to have you see my act."

"I bet it's great. You got the looks, too. Tha's what it takes in this p'fession. Make a quick change?"

"No, I wear the same dress all through."

"Oh! Well," he sighed deeply—"well, it's been great to see you, anyway. Goo'-bye."

The great lady bent down to him and kissed his forehead.

"Good-bye, Freddy," she said. "You've helped me so much."

Freddy drew in a long breath.

"M-m," he sighed, "you know how I come to peek in your door like that?"

"Because you heard me screaming 'damn'?"

"No, before that. Comin' all the way down the hall I could smell it. Smelled so nice. Don't none of these ladies use perfume. I jus' knew somebody I'd like was in here soon's I got that smell."

"Oh, Freddy, I like you, too! But I've got to hurry now. Good-bye. And thanks so much, dear."

She started out the door.

"Oh, gee! I can't go to bed!" Freddy wailed.

"Come along, then!" cried Madame d'Avala, impetuously seizing his hand. "I'll make them let you go to the concert. They must!"

They ran down the hall together hand in hand, Freddy directing the way to the Misses Blair's study. Miss Eva and Miss Nellie and Mary were there, and they looked at Freddy compassionately. And though Miss Eva said it was most unusual, Miss Nellie agreed to Madame d'Avala's request.

"For," said gentle Miss Nellie, drawing Madame d'Avala aside and lowering her voice—"for we are very sorry for Freddy now. His mother——"

"Oh, yes, she has gone to England."

"Why, no! She—is dead!"

"Oh, *mio povero bambino!* And how he adores her!"

"Yes."

"And what will he do then?"

"He can stay on here. But I am afraid he doesn't like us," Miss Nellie sighed.

"Has he no one else?"

"No—that is, a stepfather. But his mother put him here to save him from the stepfather's abuse, and—and all the coarsening influences of stage life, if you understand."

"Ah, yes, I understand," said Madame d'Avala. "And yet I think I understand the little one, too. He and I—we have the same nature. We cannot breathe in the too-high altitudes. For us there must be dancing in the valley, laughter and roses, perfume and sunshine—always sunshine."

"Oh—er—yes," replied Miss Nellie, taken aback by this effusiveness, which she could only explain as being foreign.

"It's 8:30," said Miss Eva, looking at her watch.

"Ah, then I must fly," cried Madame d'Avala.

"Goo'-bye!" said Freddy wistfully.

"*Au revoir*," said Madame d'Avala, and electrified the Misses Blair by adding, "See you after the show, kid."

"I am very lonely, too," said Margarita d'Avala after the concert—"lonely and sad."

"You are?" Freddy cried in amazement. Then, practically, "What about?"

"It's about a man," confessed the lady.

"Aw, g'wan!" exclaimed Freddy incredulously. "Say," lowering his voice confidentially, "lemme tell you something! They ain't a man on earth worth crying for."

"How did you know?" asked Margarita.

"Flo—Florette used to say so." Then a cloud passed over his face. "She used to say so," he added.

There was a moment's silence, while the lady watched him. Then Freddy's mobile face cleared, his eyes shone with their old gay confidence.

"Say, I'm tellin' you!" said Freddy, spreading his feet apart, thrusting his hands in his pockets. "I ain't got no use for men a-tall! An' you take my advice—don't bother over 'em!"

Margarita laughed. She laughed so hard that Freddy had joined her, and without knowing how, he was by her side, holding on to her hand while they both rocked with merriment. When they could laugh no more he snuggled up to the shoulder that smelled so nice. His face became babyish and wistful. He stroked the satin of the lovely gown with one timid finger, while his blue eyes implored hers.

"Ladies an' children is nicest, ain't they?" he appealed.

Suddenly the great Margarita d'Avala caught him in her arms and drew him to that warm, beautiful breast where no child's head had ever rested.

"Oh, Freddy, Freddy!" she cried. "You are right, and I must have you!"

"You kin, s' long's Florette's away," said Freddy.

WILD EARTH

By SOPHIE KERR

From Saturday Evening Post

THE big department store so terrified Wesley Dean that he got no farther than five steps beyond the entrance. Crowds of well-dressed ladies milling round like cattle, the noise of many feminine voices, the excessive warmth and the heady odour of powder and perfume—the toilet goods were grouped very near the door—all combined to bewilder and frighten him. He got out before the floorwalker of the centre aisle could so much as ask him what he wanted.

Once outside he stood in the spring wind and meditated. There must be other stores in Baltimore, little ones, where a man could buy things in quiet and decency. Until the four-o'clock motor stage started for Frederick he had nothing to do.

He stuck his hands in his pockets and started down the crowded crookedness of Lexington Street. He reached the market and strolled through it leisurely, feeling very much at home with the meats and vegetables and the good country look of many of the stall keepers. Its size amazed him; but then he'd always heard that Baltimore was a big city, and so many people must take a lot to eat. He went on, all the way through, and after a little hesitation struck down a quiet street to the right. But he saw no shops of the sort he was looking for, and he had thoughts of going back and braving the big store again. He turned again and again, pleased by the orderly rows of red-brick-with-white-trim houses, homey-looking places in spite of their smallness and close setting. At last, right in the middle of a row of these, he saw a large window set in place of the two usual smaller ones, a window filled with unmistakable feminine stuff, and the sign, small, neatly gilt lettered: Miss Tolman's Ladies' Shop. Hemstitching Done.

There wasn't a soul going in or out, so he braved it, and was happier still when he found himself the sole customer. The opening of the door made a bell tinkle in a back room.

A girl came through parted green wool curtains, a girl so flaxen-haired, with such blue eyes—like a friendly kitten—that Wesley Dean almost forgot the errand that had brought him so far.

As for the girl, she was surprised to see a man, and particularly a young country man, among the gloves and stockings, cheap pink underthings, and embroideries of Miss Tolman's shop.

"You got any—any aprons?" he stammered.

"White aprons or gingham?" The girl's smile helped Wesley a great deal. A very nice girl, he decided; but she made him feel queer, light-headed.

"I'm not sure, ma'am. When I come away from home this morning I asked Aunt Dolcey did she need anything, and she said 'yes, a couple of aprons,' but she didn't say what kind."

The girl thought it over. "I reckon maybe if she's your auntie she'd want white aprons."

Her mistake gave him a chance for the conversation which he felt a most surprising wish to make.

"No'm, she's not my auntie. She's the old coloured woman keeps house for me."

Oh, she was a very nice girl; something about the way she held her head made Wesley think of his spunky little riding mare, Teeny.

"H'm. Then I think you'd be safe to get a gingham; anyway, a gingham apron comes in handy to anybody working round a kitchen. We got some nice big ones."

"Aunt Dolcey's not so awful big; not any bigger'n you, but heavier set, like."

There is a distinct advance in friendly intimacy when one has one's size considered in relation to a customer's needs, particularly when the consideration shows how little a man knows about women's garments. The girl reached beneath the counter and brought up an armful of blue-and-white-checked aprons. She unfolded them deftly, and Wesley saw that she had small strong hands and round wrists.

"These got bibs and nice long strings, cover you all up while you're cooking. They're a dollar."

His gaze, intent on her rather than the aprons, brought her eyes to his.

"Good-looking, but country," was her swift appraisal, adding to it, "And what a funny mark he's got on his forehead."

It was true. His young hawklike face, tanned brown by sun and wind, was made strangely grim by a dark vein on his brow, which lent a frowning shadow to his whole visage. Yet the eyes she had looked into were shy and gentle and reassuringly full of open admiration.

"If you think she'll like 'em I'll take two," he said after an instant's pause.

"I'm sure she'll like 'em. They're good gingham and real well made. We don't keep shoddy stuff. You could go into one of the big stores and get aprons for fifty, sixty cents, but they wouldn't be good value."

The soft cadence of her voice gave Wesley a strange and stifled feeling around the heart. He must—he must stay and talk to her. Hardly knowing what he said, he burst into loquacity.

"I did go into one of the big stores, and it sort of scared me—everything so stuffy and heaped up, and such a lot of people. I don't get down to Baltimore very often, you see. I do most of my buying right in Frederick, but I'd broke my disk, and if you send, it's maybe weeks before the implement house will 'tend to you. So I just come down and got the piece, so there won't be but one day lost."

The girl looked up at him again, and he could feel his heart pound against his ribs. This time she was a little wistful.

"They say it's real pretty country out round Frederick. I've never been out of Baltimore, 'cept to go down the bay on excursions—Betterton and Love Point, and places like that. It makes a grand sail in hot weather."

She handed him the package and picked up the two bills he had laid down on the counter. There was plainly no reason for his further lingering. But he had an artful idea.

"Look here—maybe I ought to get Aunt Dolcey a white apron, too. Maybe she won't want the gingham ones at all."

The girl looked surprised at such extravagance.

"But if she doesn't you can bring 'em back when you come to Baltimore again, and we'd exchange 'em," she argued mildly.

"No, I better get a white one now. She puts on a white apron evenings," he added craftily.

A box of white aprons was lifted from the shelf and a choice made, but even that transaction could not last forever, as Wesley Dean was desperately aware.

"Look here, are you Miss Tolman?" he burst out. "I saw the name outside on the window."

"Mercy, no! Miss Tolman's a kind of cousin of mine. She's fifty-two, and she can't hardly get through that door there."

He disregarded the description, for the second bundle was being tied up fast. He had never seen any one tie so fast, he thought.

"My name's Wesley Dean, and I got a farm in the mountains back of Frederick. Say—I don't want you to think I'm fresh, but—but—say, would you go to the movies with me to-night?"

It had come to him in a flash that he could disregard the seat in the four-o'clock bus and go back to-morrow morning. Sweat stood out on his forehead and on his curving, clean-shaven upper lip. His boy's eyes hung on hers, pleading. All the happiness of his life, he felt, waited for this girl's answer, this little yellow-haired girl whom he had never seen until a quarter of an hour before.

"We-ell," she hesitated, "I—I don't like to have you think I'd pick up like this with any fellow that come along——"

"I don't think so!" he broke in fiercely. "If I thought so I'd never've asked you."

There was a strange breathless moment in the tiny cluttered shop, a moment such as some men and women are lucky enough to feel once in a lifetime. It is the moment when the heart's wireless sends its clear message, "This is my woman" and "This is my man." The flaxen-haired girl and the dark boy were caught in the golden magic of it and, half scared, half ecstatic, were thrown into confusion.

"I'll go," she whispered breathlessly. "There's a little park a block down the street. I'll be there at seven o'clock, by the statue."

"I'll be there, waiting for you," he replied, and because he could not bear the strange sweet pain that filled him he plunged out of the shop, jerking the door so that the little bell squealed with surprise. He had forgotten his packages.

Also, as he remembered presently, he did not know her name.

He was at the feet of the statue in the park by half-past six, and spent a restless half hour there in the cool spring twilight. Perhaps she would not come! Perhaps he had frightened her, even as he had frightened himself, by this inexplicable boldness. Other girls passed by, and some of them glanced with a coquettish challenge at the handsome tall youth with his frowning brow. But he did not see them. Presently—and it was just on the stroke of seven—he saw her coming, hesitantly, and with an air of complete and proper primness. She had on a plain little shabby suit and hat, but round her throat was a string of beads of a blue to match her eyes, an enticing, naïve harmony.

She carried the forgotten aprons, and handed them to him gravely.

"You left these," she said; and then, to regularize the situation, "My name's Anita Smithers. I ought 've told you this afternoon, but—I guess I was kind of forgetful, too."

That made them both smile, and the smile left them less shy. He stuffed the forgotten aprons into his overcoat pocket.

"I was so afraid you wouldn't come. Where can we go? I don't know anything much about the city. I'd like to take you to a nice picture show, the best there is."

She flushed with the glory of it.

"There's a real nice picture house only a little ways from here. They got a Pauline Frederick film on. I'm just crazy about Pauline Frederick."

By this time they were walking sedately out of the park, not daring to look at each other. She watched him while he bought the tickets and then a box of caramels from the candy stand inside.

"He knows what to do," she thought proudly. "He's not a bit of a hick."

"D'you go to the pictures a lot?" he asked when they were seated.

"'Most every night. I'm just crazy about 'em."

"I expect you've got steady company, then?" The question fairly jerked out of him.

She shook her head. "No, I almost always go by myself. My girl friend, she goes with me sometimes."

He sighed with relief. "They got good picture shows in Frederick. I go 'most every Saturday night."

"But you don't live right in Frederick, you said."

He seized the chance to tell her about himself.

"Oh, my, no. I live back in the mountains. Say, I just wish you could see my place. It's up high, and you can look out, ever so far—everything kind of drops away below, and you can see the river and the woods, and it takes different colours, 'cording to the season and the weather. Some days when I'm ploughing or disking and I get up on the ridge, it's so high up and far away seems like I'm on top the whole world. It's lonesome—it's off the pike, you see—but I like it. Here in the city everything crowds on you so close."

She had listened with the keenest interest.

"That's so. It must be grand to get off by yourself and have plenty room. I get so tired of that squinched-in, narrow, stuffy shop; and the place where I board is worse. I don't make enough to have a room by myself. There's two other girls in with me, and seems like we're always under-foot to each other. And there isn't any parlour, and we got only one bureau for the three of us, and you can guess what a mess that is. And the closet's about as big as a pocket handkerchief."

"Ain't you got any folks?"

The blue eyes held a sudden mist.

"Nobody but Miss Tolman, and she's only a distant cousin. Ma died two years ago. She used to sew, but she wasn't strong, and we never could get ahead."

"My folks are all gone, too."

How little and alone she was, but how much nearer to him her aloneness brought her. He wanted to put his hand over hers and tell her that he would take care of her, that she need never be alone again. But the beginning of the film choked back the words. He poked the box of caramels at her, and she took it, opened it with a murmured "Oh, my, thank you!" Presently they both had sweetly bulging

cheeks. Where their elbows touched on the narrow chair arm made tingling thrills run all over him. Once she gave him an unconscious nudge of excitement.

Out of the corner of his eye he studied her delicate side face as she sat, with her lips parted, intent on the film.

"She's pretty—and she's good," thought Wesley Dean. "I expect she's too good for me."

But that unwontedly humble thought did not alter it a hair's breadth that she must be his. The Deans had their way always. The veins in his wrists and the vein in his forehead beat with his hot purpose. He shifted so that his arm did not touch hers, for he found the nearness of her disturbing; he could not plan or think clearly while she was so close. And he must think clearly.

When the last flicker of the feature was over and the comic and the news had wrung their last laugh and gasp of interest from the crowd, they joined the slow exit of the audience in silence. On the sidewalk, however, she found her voice.

"It was an awful nice picture," she said softly. "'Most the nicest I ever saw."

"Look here, let's go somewhere and have a hot choc'late, or some soda, or ice cream," he broke in hurriedly. He could not let her go with so much yet unsaid. "Or would you like an oyster stew in a reg'lar restaurant? Yes, that'd be better. Come on; it isn't late."

"Well, after all those caramels, I shouldn't think an oyster stew——"

"You can have something else, then." The main thing was to get her at a table opposite him, where they wouldn't have to hurry away. "Let's go in there."

He pointed toward a small restaurant across the street where red candlelights glimmered warmly through panelled lace.

"But that looks like such a stylish place," she protested, even as she let him guide her toward it.

But it was not so stylish when they got inside, and the appearance of the stout woman, evidently both proprietor and cashier, who presided over the scene at a table on a low platform near the door reassured them both. And the red candleshades were only crinkled paper; the lace curtains showed many careful darns. A rebellious boy of fourteen, in

a white jacket and apron, evidently the proprietor's son, came to take their order. After a good bit of urging Anita said that she would take a ham sandwich and a cup of coffee.

Wesley ordered an oyster stew for himself, and coffee, and then grandly added that they would both have vanilla and chocolate ice cream.

"He looks as if he just hated being a waiter," said Anita, indicating the departing boy servitor.

"Sh'd think he would," said Wesley. He put his arms on the table and leaned toward her. "I was going home this afternoon till I saw you. I stayed over just to see you again. I've got to go back in the morning, for I've not got my spring work done; but—you're going with me."

The vein on his forehead heightened his look of desperate determination. He was not so much a suitor as a commander.

"You haven't got any folks and neither have I, so that makes it easy. I'll come for you in the morning, about eight o'clock, and we'll go get a license and get married, and then we can get the ten-o'clock bus out to Frederick. Oh, girl, I never saw any one like you! I—I'll be good to you—I'll take care of you. It don't matter if I didn't ever see you till this afternoon, I'd never find anybody else that I want so much in a hundred thousand years. I've not got a lot of money, but the farm's mine, all free and clear, and if my wheat turns out all right I'll have a thousand dollars' cash outright come the end of the year, even after the taxes are paid and everything. Won't you look at me, Anita—won't you tell me something? Don't you like me?"

The girl had listened with her eyes cast down, her hands nervously picking at the edge of the tablecloth. But he was not mistaken in her. She had wherewith to meet him, and her gaze was honest, without coquetry or evasion.

"Oh, I do like you!" she cried with quick colour. "I do! I do! I always thought somebody like you'd come along some day, just like this, and then—it just seemed foolish to expect it. But look here. I told you a story, right off. My name's not Anita—it's Annie. I took to pretending it's Anita because—it does seem sort of silly, but I got to tell you—because I saw it in the movies, and it seemed sort of cute and different, and Annie's such a plain, common name.

But I couldn't let you go on talking like that and calling me by it, now could I?"

The mutinous young waiter brought their food and thumped it truculently down before them.

"Look out!" said Dean with sudden violent harshness, the vein in his forehead darkening ominously. "What do you think you're doing, feeding cattle?"

The boy drew back in confusion, and Annie exclaimed: "Oh, he didn't mean it anything against us—he's just mad because he has to be a waiter."

"Well, he'd better be careful; kids can be too smart Aleck."

The little gust had deflected them away from their own affairs. But Annie brought them back. She leaned toward him.

"You make me kind of afraid of you. If you ever spoke to me like that it'd just about kill me."

He was contrite. "Why, I couldn't ever speak to you like that, honey; it just made me mad the way he banged things down in front of you. I don't want people to treat you like that."

"And you look so fierce, too—scowling so all the time."

He put up a brown finger and touched his savage vein.

"Now, now—you mustn't mind my look. All the Dean men are marked like that; it's in the blood. It don't mean a thing." He smiled winningly. "I reckon if you're beginning to scold me you're going to marry me, huh?"

Something very sweet and womanly leaped in Annie's blue eyes.

"I—I reckon I am," she said, and then confessed herself a brave adventurer and philosopher in one. "Yes, I'd be a fool to sit round and make excuses and pretend it wouldn't do to be so out of the ordinary when here you are and here I am, and it means—our whole lives. I don't care, either, if I didn't ever set eyes on you till to-day—I know you're all right and that what you say's true. And I feel as if I'd known you for years and years."

"That's the way I felt about you the minute I looked at you. Oh"—he gave a vast and shaking sigh—"I can't hardly believe my luck. Eat up your supper and let's get out of here. Maybe there's some stores open yet and I could buy you a ring."

"And I have to be in my boarding house by half-past ten," offered Annie, "or I'll be locked out. What the girls are going to say when I come in and tell 'em——" She looked at him with intense and piteous question—the question that every woman at the moment of surrender asks sometimes with her lips, but always with her heart: "It is going to be all right, isn't it? And you'll be good to me?"

"So help me God," said young Wesley Dean.

The farm lay high, as Wesley had said. Indeed, all the way from Baltimore they had seemed to be going into the hills, those placidly rounding friendly Maryland hills that rise so softly, so gradually that the traveller is not conscious of ascent. The long straight road dips across them gallantly, a silver band of travel to tie them to the city, with little cities or towns pendent from it at wide intervals. Trees edge it with a fringe of green; poor trees, maimed by the trimmers' saws and shears into twisted caricatures of what a tree should be, because the telegraph wires and telephone wires must pass, and oaks and locusts, pines and maples, must be butchered of their spreading branches to give them room.

It was along this highway that the motor bus, filled with passengers and baggage and driven with considerably more haste than discretion, carried the newly married pair. Annie's eyes grew wide at the wonder and beauty of it. She was not at all afraid. She snuggled her hand into Wes's and loved it—and loved him, too, with his look of pride and joy in her. She was content to be silent and let him talk. Now and then she looked at the little turquoise ring on her finger above the shiny new wedding ring, and loved that, too, for he had chosen it at once from the trayful offered them, blurting out that she must have it because it matched her eyes.

"All this country out here's rich," he bragged, "but Fred'rick County's far the richest land of all. Richest in the state. Maybe richest in the whole United States, I dunno. And all the farms are big. Great big farms—and great big teams to till 'em. People don't use mules here s'much as they do over on the Eastern Shore. And there's not any sand, like there is over there—in spots, that is."

"What's that man doing?" asked Annie alertly.

"Ploughin'. Say, didn't you ever see a man ploughin' before?"

"Only in the movies," said Annie, unabashed. "Do you ever plough?"

He laughed outright.

"Say, you're going to be some little farmer's wife. I can see that. Yes'm, I plough a little now and then. It's like fancywork—awful fascinating—and once you get started you don't want to stop till you get a whole field done."

"Quit kidding."

"Say, Annie, do you know a chicken when you see it walking round? Or a turkey? Or a guinea keet? We got 'em all. Aunt Dolcey, she takes care of 'em."

"I'd like to take care of 'em. I'll feed 'em, if she'll show me how."

"Aunt Dolcey 'll show you. She'll be tickled to death to have somebody feed 'em when she's got the mis'ry."

At Frederick they left the big motor bus and got into Wes's own racketsy flivver, the possession of which delighted Annie's heart.

"My land, I never thought I'd get married to a man that owned an automobile," she confessed with flattering frankness in her voice.

"This ain't an automobile," said Wes. "It's a coffeepot, and an awful mean one. Sometimes she won't boil, no matter what I do."

The coffeepot on this particular day chose to boil. They rattled merrily out of Frederick and off into the higher hills beyond. It was a little after noon when they reached the farm.

They had had to turn off the pike and take a winding wood road, rough and muddy from the spring rains. All through the budding green of the trees dogwood had hung out white bridal garlands for them, and there were violets in all the little mossy hollows. At last they came through to the clearing, where lay the farm, right on the ridge, its fields smiling in the sun, a truce of Nature with man's energy and persistence. Yet not a final truce. For all around, the woods crept up to the open and thrust in tentative fingers—tiny pine trees, sprouts and seedlings of hardwood, scraps of underbrush—all trying to gain a foothold and even when cut and over-

turned by the sharp plough still clinging tenaciously to their feeble rooting.

"It looks somehow," said Annie, vaguely understanding this, "as if the trees and things were just waiting to climb over the walls."

"And that's what they are," said Wesley Dean. "The time I put in grubbing! Well—let's go in and see Aunt Dolcey."

He had told her, coming out, that he was afraid she would find the house sort of plain, but just the space of it delighted her. The rooms were bare and square, whitewashed exquisitely, the furniture dark old cherry and walnut of a style three generations past.

There were no blinds or curtains, and in the streaming sunlight Annie could see that everything was clean and polished to the last flicker of high light. Here and there were bits of colour—crimson and blue in the rag carpet, golden brass candlesticks on the mantel, a red-beaded mat on the table under the lamp, the lamp itself clear glass and filled with red kerosene that happily repeated the tint of the mat. It all pleased Annie, touching some hitherto untwanged chord of beauty in her nature. And there was about it the unmistakable atmosphere of home.

"Old-fashioned but sort of swell, too," she decided. "Looks kind of like some of the parlours of those old houses on Charles Street that I used to rubber into in the evenings when the lights were lit and they'd forgot to put the blinds down."

She liked the impassive almost Egyptian face of Aunt Dolcey, too. The old coloured woman had received her with a serious regard but friendly.

"Mist' Wes, he stahle me mighty frequen', but he nevah stahle me with no marryin' befo'," she said. "Honey, it'll be mighty nice to have a pret' young gal in de house. I'll serve you de bes' I kin, faithful an' stiddy, like I always serve him. Ef I'd 'a' known you was a-comin' I'd sho' had somethin' fo' dinneh to-day besides greens an' po'k, cracklin' pone an' apple dumplin's. That's nuffin' fo' a weddin' dinneh."

But when they came to eat it, it was delicious—the greens delicately seasoned, not greasy, the salt pork home-cured and

sweet, the cracklin' pone crumbling with richness, and the apple dumpling a delight of spicy flavour.

They sat opposite each other, in as matter-of-fact fashion as if they had been married for years. They were young and exceedingly hungry, and hunger destroys self-consciousness.

The china was very old—white plates with a curving pattern of blue leaves and yellow berries. The knives and forks were polished steel with horn handles. The spoons were silver; old handmade rat-tail spoons they were, with the mark of the smith's mallet still upon them and the initials W. D. cut in uneven letters.

"Those were my great-granddad's," said Wesley. "Same name as mine. He had 'em made out of silver money by a man down in Frederick. They must be nearly a hundred years old. My great-granddad, he was the man that bought this land and began to clear it. He wanted to be away off from everybody."

"Why?" asked Annie, interested in the story.

The vein on Wesley's forehead seemed to grow larger and darker as he answered:

"Oh, he got into trouble—knocked a man down, and the fellow struck his head on a stone and died. It didn't come to trial—it really was an accident—but it didn't make granddad popular. Not that he cared. He was a hard-headed, hard-fisted old son of a gun, if there ever was one, according to the stories they tell about him."

"What were they fighting about?"

"Oh, I dunno—granddad was high-tempered, and this fellow was sort of smart Aleck; give him some lip about something and dared him to touch him. And quick's a wink granddad punched him. At least that's the way I always heard it. Prob'ly they'd both been taking too much hard cider. Bring me another dumplin', Aunt Dolcey, please."

As the old woman entered, bringing the dumpling, Annie fancied there were both warning and sympathy in her eyes. Why, she couldn't imagine. In a moment she forgot it, for Wesley was looking at her hard.

"It's funny," he said, "to think I only saw you yesterday, and that we got married this morning. Seems as if you'd been here for years and years. Does it seem awful strange to you, honey?"

"No," said Annie. "No, it doesn't. It is queer, but all the way here, and when I come into the house, I had a sense of having been here before sometime; kind of as if it was my home all along and I hadn't known about it."

"So it was—and if I hadn't ever met you I'd been an old bach all my life."

"Yes, you would."

"Yes, I wouldn't."

They were both laughing now. He got up and stretched himself.

"Well, Mrs. Dean," he said, "I gotta go out and fix my disker, and you gotta come along. I don't want to let you out of my sight. You might fly off somewhere, and I'd never find you again."

"Don't you worry about that. You couldn't lose me if you tried."

They went through the kitchen, and there a tall gaunt old coloured man rose and bowed respectfully. He and Aunt Dolcey were having their own dinner at the kitchen table.

"This here's Unc' Zenas," said Wesley. "He's Aunt Dolcey's husband, and helps me on the place."

And again Annie saw, this time in the old man's eyes, the flicker of sympathy and apprehension that she had marked in Aunt Dolcey's.

"And right glad to welcome y', Missy," said Unc' Zenas. "We didn' spect Marse Wes to bring home a wife whenas he lef', but that ain' no sign that it ain' a mighty fine thing."

They went out into the mellow spring day. Wesley Dean, now in his blue overalls and working shirt, became a king in his own domain, a part of the fair primitiveness about them. It was as if he had sprung from this dark fertile soil, was made of its elements, at one with it. Here he belonged, and the very spring of the earth beneath his feet was repeated in the measured beating of his blood. The land could not warp or break him, as it does so many, for he belonged to it as essentially and as completely as it belonged to him. Dimly the little town girl beside him felt this, and dimly she hoped that she, too, might prove to be of the same mould.

"Look at the barn, and the stables, and the corncrib," he was saying. "See how they're all built? Hand-hewn logs chinked with plaster. Great-granddad built them all,

helped by his two slaves. That's all the slaves he had, just two, and one of 'em was Unc' Zenas's grandfather. Everything's strong and sound as the day he finished it."

"That one looks newer," said Annie, pointing.

Wesley looked a little shamefaced, as does every typical Anglo-Saxon discovered in sentiment.

"I built that," he confessed. "It's a chicken house. Somehow I didn't want to go down to the sawmill and get planks and build with 'em 'mongst all these old log things. So I got the logs out in the woods and built same as great-granddad. Maybe it was foolish, but I couldn't help it."

"It wasn't foolish; it was nice," she affirmed.

She perched on the tongue of a wagon while he mended the disker, dividing her attention between him and the live things of the barnyard. A string of decorative white ducks marched in single file about the edge of the cow pound. Beyond them a proud red-wattled cock paraded and purred among his harem of trim hens, now and then disturbed in his dignity by the darting nervousness of a pair of malicious guineas, acknowledged brigands of the feathered tribes. Trim iridescent pigeons toddled about on their coral feet, looking for left-overs from the chickens' table.

"Say, Wes, I should think you'd have a dog," she said suddenly. "A nice big dog lazying round here would sort of complete it."

He bent suddenly over his disker and gave the nut he was working on a mighty twist, but he had tossed aside his hat, and she could see the sudden jump and darkening of his menacing vein.

"I had a dog," he said in a low voice, "but he died."

A curious restraint fell on them, and for the first time Annie felt herself an alien, a stranger, far adrift from familiar shores. She shivered in the light wind.

"You cold? You better go in the house and get something round you," Wes said to her.

"I guess I'd better." And she left him hammering.

In the house she found Aunt Dolcey in the big bedroom over the living room. She had just finished remaking the bed—an old maple four-poster, the wood a soft and mellowed orange, fine and colourful against the white quilt, the lace-edged pillow slips.

"I put on clean sheets," said Aunt Dolcey as Annie hesitated on the threshold. "Yes'm, I put on everything clean, an' the bes'. I know what's fitten. My chile, dish yer de third bridal bed I made up for wives of de Dean men."

Something caught in Annie's throat, terrified her. This old black woman, with her remoteness, her pitying wise eyes, what did she mean? Annie wanted terribly to ask her. But how begin? How get through this wall of inscrutability which the black and yellow races have raised for their protection?

She fluttered nearer to the old woman.

"Look," she began tremulously—"look—it's all right, isn't it, my marrying him so quick? I haven't got any folks, and—and I suppose I haven't got much sense; but there was something about him that just made me trust him and—and want him. But it was all so quick, and—now I'm here it seems like maybe—there was—something—— Oh, you'd tell me, wouldn't you? It is all right, isn't it?"

The old woman considered. "It's all right ef you're all right," she pronounced at length.

"But—but what do you mean? And—and look here—Aunt Dolcey—tell me—what'd he do to that dog he had?"

"What you know 'bout any dog?"

"I don't know—anything; but when I asked him why he didn't have a dog—he was queer. It scared me."

"Doan be skeered. They ain' nuffin' to be skeered of 'bout Marse Wes. Eve'ything all right ef you got patience, an' ef you got sense, an' ef you got haht enough. Sperrit an' sense go far, but the haht gwine carry you froo. Now I said my say"—her tone mellowed into unctuous kindness—"what you want, Missy? Som'n Aun' Dolcey c'n fotch you? Temme what it is, f'r I got to be up an' erbout my wuk. I got er weddin' cake to mek yit this ebenin'. Yes, ma'am—I gwi' mek you weddin' cake fill de bigges' pan in de kitchen."

She helped Annie rummage in her trunk and get out the sweater she had come in for, and it was not until the girl was running back to the barns that she realized Aunt Dolcey had not answered her question. But the old woman's words had steadied her, reassured her.

And Wes received her gayly. His repairs were done, his team in harness, ready to start.

"It's a shame," he said. "We ought to go off down to town and play round and have a big time, but I'm so behind with my disking, Annie, honey. You see I had to stay over a day in Baltimore. Fact. Important business." He winked at her jocosely. "So I've got to work rest of the day. That's what comes of marrying a farmer. Farm work don't even wait on a bride, not even the prettiest bride in the world."

He stooped to kiss her, and she held tight to his arm.

"I don't mind. You go on about your business and I'll get all unpacked and settled. But don't be late to supper—Aunt Dolcey's making us a wedding cake."

She watched him as he drove down the lane and turned into the field and steadied the first straining rush of his team. Again she felt her abandonment, her utter forlornity, her distance from everything she had known and been accustomed to. But once more she proved herself an adventurer and a philosopher.

Shrugging her shoulders, she turned back to the house.

"It may be a funny way to get married; but everything's all right until it stops being all right, and—and I like it here."

She had been married a week now, and the week had been the fairest of fair weather, indoors as well as out. Now she sat at the clumsy old secretary desk to write a letter to Miss Tolman.

. . . For all you said, and hought I was crazy, I am just as happy as I can be. Wes is kind and full of fun, and he works very hard. This farm is a pretty place, and the house is ten times as big as your shop. I am learning to cook and churn butter, and Aunt Dolcey, the old coloured woman, teaches me and doesn't laugh when I am dumb. She says, and Wes does, too, that I am a born farmer's wife, and I think maybe I am, for I like it in the country more than I ever thought I'd like any place, and I don't get a bit lonely. You ought to see our wheat—it's like green satin, only prettier.

I hope the rheumatism in your hands is better, and that you have got somebody good in my place. Cousin Lorena, I am a very lucky girl to fall in love with such a nice man, with a piece of property and a flivver, even if it is an old one; but better than all that he has is Wes himself, for you never saw a better, kinder man. He is not rough and does not chew tobacco as you thought maybe he did, only smokes a pipe once in a while. I made a sweet-potato custard yesterday, and he said it was the best he ever tasted. He says I must not do anything that is too hard for me, but

I am going to drop seed corn. We have been down to town once, and went to the movies and bought some candy, and he wanted to buy me a new hat, but I wouldn't let him. He is so kind. . . .

She had written in a glow of happiness, trying to tell everything and finding it hard to get it into words that would allay Cousin Lorena's forebodings and impress her properly. Annie frowned at the paper. How inform a bilious, middle-aged prophet of evil that she had not only wedded prosperity and industry but also a glorious young demigod whose tenderness and goodness passed belief?

Suddenly she heard a voice, loud, angry, incoherent. She dropped the pen and ran out to the kitchen door.

Wes stood there, confronting Uncle Zenas—a Wes she had never dreamed could exist. The vein on his forehead was black and swollen; indeed his whole face was distorted with rage.

"You damned old liar—don't you tell me again you put that pitchfork away when I found it myself in the stable behind the mare's stall. Pretty business if she'd knocked it down and run one of the tines into her."

"Marse Wes, you had dat pitchfo'k dere yo'se'f dis mawnin'; I ain't nevah touch dat pitchfo'k." Unc' Zenas's voice was low and even.

Behind Wes's back Aunt Dolcey made signs to her husband for silence.

"I tell you you're a liar, and by rights I ought to cut your lying tongue out of your head! I haven't even seen that pitchfork for three days, and when I went to look for it just now I found it in the stable where you'd had it cleaning out the stalls. Now shut up and get out about your work! Don't let me hear another word out of you!"

Unc' Zenas turned away and Wes, without a word or look at the two women, strode after him. Annie, shaken, caught Aunt Dolcey's arm.

"Oh, Aunt Dolcey," she breathed, "what on earth was the matter?"

Aunt Dolcey drew her into the kitchen.

"Nuffin' but Marse Wes flyin' int' one his bad Dean temper fits, honey," said the old woman. "No use to min' him. No use payin' any 'tention. Dat why I waggle my head at

Zenas to say nuffin' back. Talk back to Marse Wes when he's high-flyin' on'y meks things worse."

Annie beheld an abyss yawning beneath her feet.

"Yes, but, Aunt Dolcey—what's the sense in talking that way? It wasn't anything, just a pitchfork out of place. And he went on so. And he looked so dreadful."

Aunt Dolcey rattled her pans.

"I been dreadin' dis moment, whenas you firs' see Marse Wes in his anger. Zenas an' me, we's use to it. Marse Wes dataway; som'n go wrong he fly off de handle. Zenas ain't mislay no pitchfo'k—I seed Marse Wes mahse'f wid dat pitchfo'k dis mawnin'. But eve'y once in a while he git a temper fit an' blow off he mouf like dat. Sometimes he strike somebuddy—but he doan often strike Zenas. Sometimes he git mad at oner de hosses an' frail it proper. Dat high temper run in de Dean fambly, chile. Dey gits mad, an' dey flies off, an' you just got to stan' it."

"But does he—does he get over it quick?"

The old negress shook her head.

"He'll be mighty quiet come suppeh-time, not talkin' much, lookin' dahk. Walk light, an' don't say nuffin' rile him up, eve'ything all right. T'-morrow mawnin' come, he's outer it." Her voice rose into a minor cadence, almost a chant. "Chile, it's a dahk shadder on all de Deans—dey all mahked wid dat frown on deir foreheads, an' dey all got dahk hours come to um. Marse Wes's maw she fade out an' die caze she cain' stan' no such. His grammaw, she leave his grampaw. An' so on back. Ontell some ooman marry a Dean who kin chase dat debbil outer him, jes so long de Dean men lib in de shadder. I tole you, ain' I, de day you come, sperrit an' sense carry you fur, but it's de haht gwine carry you froo. Now you un'stan'."

Yes, Annie understood, imperfectly. So might Red Riding Hood have understood when the wolf suddenly appeared beside her peaceful pathway. She asked one more question, "Does he get mad often?" and waited, trembling, for the answer.

Aunt Dolcey stuck out her underlip. "Sometime he do, en den again, sometime he doan'. Mos' giner'ly he do."

Annie walked back to her letter, and looked at its last phrase. She picked up the pen, but did not write.

Then with a quick intake of breath she took her first conscious step in the path of loyal wifehood.

She added, writing fast: "He is the best man that ever lived, I do believe," and signed her name, folded the letter and sealed it in its envelope as quickly as she could.

At supper she watched Wes. He was, as Aunt Dolcey had predicted, very silent; the vein in his forehead still twitched menacingly and the pupils of his eyes were distended until the colour about them disappeared in blackness. After he had eaten he went outside and smoked, while Annie sat fiddling with a bit of sewing and dreading she knew not what.

But nothing happened. Presently he came in, announced that he was tired and had a hard day before him to-morrow, and thought he'd go to bed.

Long after he had fallen into immobile slumber Annie lay beside him, awake, marvelling how suddenly he had become a stranger, almost an ogre. Yet she loved him and yearned to him. The impulse that had made her finish the letter to Cousin Lorena in the same spirit in which she had begun it called her to pity and help him. She must conceal his weakness from their world. She listened to his deep, regular breathing, she put her hand against his hard palm.

"I'm his wife," thought Annie Dean with inarticulate tenderness. "I'm going to try to be everything a wife ought to be."

The next morning he was his old self again, laughing, joking, teasing her as usual. The scene of yesterday seemed to have gone utterly from his memory, though he must have known that she had seen and heard it. But he made no allusion to it, nor did she. The farm work was pressing; the warm spring days foretold an early season.

As he went whistling out toward the barn Annie heard him salute Unc' Zenas with familiar friendliness:

"How's tricks this morning? Think the Jersey'll be fresh next week?"

Aunt Dolcey heard him, too, and she and Annie exchanged long glances. The old woman's said, "You see—what I told you was true"; and the young woman's answered, "Yes, I see, and I understand. I'm going to see it through."

But something in her youth had definitely vanished, as it

always does when responsibility lays its heavy hand on us. She went about her new life questioningly eager for understanding. There was so much for her to see and learn—the erratic ways of setting hens, the care of foolish little baby chicks; the spring house, cool and damp and gray-walled, with its trickle of cold water forever eddying about the crocks of cream-topped milk; the garden making, left to her and Aunt Dolcey after the first spading; the various messes and mashes to be prepared for cows with calf; the use of the stored vegetables and fruits, and meat dried and salted in such generous quantity that she marvelled at it. All the farm woman's primer she learned, bit by bit, seeing how it supplemented and harmonized with that life of the fields that so engrossed and commanded Wes.

But through it all, beneath it all, she found herself waiting, with dread, for another outburst. Against whom would it be this time—Unc' Zenas again—Aunt Dolcey—one of the animals—or perhaps herself? She wondered if she could bear it if he turned on her.

She was working in the spring house mixing cream with curd for cottage cheese, very busy and anxious over it, for this was her first essay alone, when she heard Wes again in anger. She dropped her spoon, but did not go to look, only concentrated herself to listen.

This time he was cursing one of his horses, and she could hear the stinging whish of a whip, a wicked and sinister emphasis to the beast's snorting and frenzied thumping of hoofs. Her blue eyes dilated with fear; she knew in what pain and fright the horse must be lunging under those blows. And Wes, raucous, violent, his mouth foul with unclean words—only this morning he had told her that when Sunday came they'd go into the woods and find a wild clematis to plant beside the front door. Wild clematis! She could have laughed at the irony of it.

At last she could bear it no longer; she put her hands to her ears to shut out the hideousness of it. After an interminable wait she took them down. He had stopped—there was silence—but she heard footsteps outside, and she literally cowered into the darkest corner of the spring house. But it was only Aunt Dolcey, her lips set in a line of endurance.

"I was lookin' erbout foh you, honey," she said reassur-

ingly. "I di'n' know where you was, en den I remembah you come off down heah. Let Aunt Dolcey finish up dat cheese."

"What—what started him?" asked Annie piteously.

"I doan' jes' know—sound' like one de big team di'n' go inter his right stall, er som'n like dat. It's always som'n triflin', en no 'count. But land, he'll be ovah it come night. Doan' look so white en skeer, chile."

"But—but I been thinking—what if he might turn on me—what if he'd strike me? Aunt Dolcey—did he ever strike you?"

"Oncet."

"Oh, Aunt Dolcey, what did you do?"

Something flared in Aunt Dolcey's eyes that was as old as her race. She looked past Annie as if she saw something she rather relished; just so her ancestors must have looked when they were dancing before a bloodstained Congo fetish.

"You see dat big white scar on Marse Wes' lef' wris'? When he struck me I mahk him dere wid my hot flatiron. Ain' no man eveh gwine lif' his hand to Dolcey, no matter who."

A shrewd question came to Annie:

"Aunt Dolcey, did he ever strike you again?"

"No, ma'am, no 'ndeedy, he didn'. Wil' Marse Wes may be, but he ain' no crazy man. It's dat ole debbil in his nature, Miss Annie, honey. En ef ever once som'n tremenjus happen to Marse Wes, dat debbil 'll be cas' out. But hit's got to be stronger en mo' pow'ful dan he is. Not 'ligion, fer 'ligion goes f'm de outside in. Som'n got to come from inside Marse Wes out befo' dat ole debbil is laid."

This was meagre comfort, and Annie did not follow the primitive psychology of it. She only knew that into her happiness there had come again the darkening of a fear, fear that was to be her devil, no less terrible because his presence was for the most part veiled.

But again she steeled her courage. "I won't let him spoil everything; I won't let him make me afraid of him," she vowed, seeing Wes in his silent mood that night. "I won't be afraid of him. I wish I could cut that old vein out of his forehead. I hate it—it's just as if it was the thing that starts him. Never seems as if it was part of the real Wes, my Wes."

In the depths of the woods, on Sunday, she stood by while

he dug up the wild clematis—stood so he could not see her lips quiver—and she put her clenched hands behind her for fear they, too, would betray her.

“Wes,” she asked, “what made you get so mad last Thursday and beat old Pomp so?”

He turned toward her in genuine surprise.

“I wasn’t mad; not much, that is. And all I laid on Pomp’s tough old hide couldn’t hurt him. He’s as mean as a mule, that old scoundrel. Gets me riled every once in a while.”

“I wish you wouldn’t ever do it again. It scared me almost to death.”

“Scared you!” he laughed. “Oh, Annie, you little silly—you aren’t scared of me. Now don’t let on you are. What you doing—trying to kid me? There, ain’t that a splendid plant? I believe I’ll take back a couple shovelfuls this rich wood earth to put in under it. It’ll never know it’s not at home.”

“Yes, but, Wes—I wish you’d promise me something.”

“Promise you anything.”

“Then—promise me not to get mad and beat the horses any more or holler at Unc’ Zenas. I don’t like it.”

“Annie, you little simp—what’s the matter with you? A fellow’s got to let off steam once in a while, and if you’d been pestered like I have with Unc’ Zenas’s ornery trifling spells and old Pomp’s general cussedness, you’d wonder that I don’t get mad and stay mad every minute. Don’t let’s talk any more about it. Say, look there—there’s a scarlet tanager! Ain’t it pretty? Shyest bird there is, but up here in the woods there’s a couple pairs ’most every year. Pull that old newspaper up round the earth a little, so’s I can get a better holt of it. That’s the girl. Gee, I never knew what fun it’d be to have a wife who’d be so darn chummy as you are. How d’you like your husband, Mrs. Dean? Ain’t it about time you said something nice to the poor feller instead of scolding his lights and liver out of place on a nice peaceful Sabbath day? You ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

She pushed back the fear devil and answered his smile.

“No, sir, I’m not going to say anything nice to my husband. I’ll tell you a secret about him—he’s awful stuck on himself now.”

"Why shouldn't he be? Look who he picked out to marry."

Who could stand against such beguiling? Annie looked up at him and saw his Dean mark give a little mocking twitch, as if it rejoiced in her thwarting.

But she said no more; and they planted the wild clematis with its black woods earth beneath at the side of the front door, and Annie twisted its pliable green stems round one of the posts of the little benched entrance.

Her hands moved deftly, and Wes, who had finished firming the earth about the plant, watched them.

"Your little paws are gettin' awful brown," he said. "I remember that first day, in the shop, how white they were—and how quick they moved. You wrapped up them aprons like somethin' was after you, and I was trying to get my nerve up to speak to you."

"Tryin' to get up your nerve! I reckon it wasn't much effort. There, don't that vine look's if it grew there of itself?"

"Yeh—it looks fine." He sat down on the bench and pulled her down beside him, his arm about her. "Annie, baby, are y' happy?"

She put her cheek against his shoulder and shut her eyes.

"I'm so happy I wouldn't darst be any happier."

"You're not sorry you picked up with me so quick? You don't wish't you'd stayed down in Balt'mer and got you a city beau?"

"I'd rather be with you—here—than any place in the world. And, Wes—I think you're the best and kindest man that ever lived. I wouldn't have you changed, any way, one little bit."

She defied her fears and that mocking, twitching vein with the words.

"Same here. Made to order for me, you were. First minute I looked in those round blue eyes of yours I knew it."

"It isn't possible," she thought. "It isn't possible that he can get so mad and be so dreadful. Maybe if I can make him think he's awful good and kind"—oh, simple subtlety—"he'll believe he is, too, and he'll stop getting such spells. Oh, if he would always be just like this!"

But it was only two days later when she called him to help her; there was a hen that was possessed to brood, and Aunt

Dolcey had declared that it was too late, that summer chickens never thrived.

"I can't get her out, Wes," said Annie. "She's 'way in under the stable, and she pecks at me so mean. You got longer arms'n me—you reach in and grab her."

He came, smiling. He reached in and grabbed, and the incensed biddy pecked viciously.

In a flash his anger was on him. He snatched again, and this time brought out the creature and dropped her with wrung neck, a mass of quivering feathers and horribly jerking feet, before Annie.

"I reckon that'll learn the old crow!" he snarled, and strode away.

"We might's well have soup for supper," remarked Aunt Dolcey, coming on the scene a moment later. "Dere, chile, what's a chicken, anyway?"

"It's not that," said Annie briefly; "but he makes me afraid of him. If I get too afraid of him I'll stop caring anything about him. I don't want to do that."

"Den," answered Aunt Dolcey with equal brevity, "you got think up some manner er means to dribe his debbil out. Like I done tol' you."

"Yes, but——"

Aunt Dolcey paused, holding the carcass of the chicken in her hands, and faced her.

"Dishyer ain' nuthin'. Wait tell he gits one his still spells, whenas he doan' speak ter nobody an' doan' do no work. Why ain' we got no seed potatoes? Marse Wes he took a contrairy spell an' he wouldn't dig 'em, an' he wouldn't let Zenas tech 'em needer. Me, I went out moonlight nights an' dug some to eat an' hid 'em in de cellar. Miss Annie, you doan' know nuffin' erbout de Dean temper yit."

They went silently to the house. Aunt Dolcey stopped in the kitchen and Annie went on into the living room. There on the walls hung the pictures of Wes's father and mother, cabinet photographs framed square in light wood. Annie looked at those pictured faces in accusing inquiry. Why had they bequeathed Wes such a legacy? In his father's face, despite the beard that was the fashion of those days, there was the same unmistakable pride and passion of Wes to-day. And his mother was a meek woman who could not live and

endure the Dean temper. Well, Annie was not going to be meek. She thought with satisfaction of Aunt Dolcey and the hot flatiron. The fact that he had never lifted finger to Aunt Dolcey again proved that if one person could thus conquer him, so might another. Was she, his wife, to be less resourceful, less self-respecting than that old Negro woman? Was she to endure what Aunt Dolcey would not?

Suddenly she snatched out the little old family album from its place in the top of the desk secretary, an old-fashioned affair bound in shabby brown leather with two gilt clasps. Here were more pictures of the Dean line—his grandfather, more bearded than his father, his Dean vein even more prominent; his grandmother, another meek woman.

"Probably the old wretch beat her," thought Annie angrily.

Another page and here was great-grandfather himself, in middle age, his picture—a faded daguerreotype—showing him in his Sunday best, but plainly in no Sunday mood. "Looks like a pirate," was Annie's comment. There was no picture of great-grandmother. "Probably he killed her off too young, before she had time to get her picture taken." And Annie's eyes darted blue fire at the supposed culprit. She shook her brown little fist at him. "You started all this," she said aloud. "You began it. If you'd had a wife who'd've stood up to you you'd never got drunk and killed a man, and you wouldn't have left your family a nasty old mad vein in the middle of their foreheads, looking perfectly un-Christian. I just wish I had you here, you old scoundrel! I'll bet I'd tell you something that'd make your ears smart."

She banged to the album and put it in its place.

"Well, not me!" said Annie. "Not me! I'm not going to be bullied and scared to death by any man with a bad temper, and the very next time Mister Wes flies off the handle and raises Cain I'm going to raise Cain, two to his one. I won't be scared! I won't be a little gump and take such actions off any man. We'll see!"

It is easy enough to be bold and resolute and threaten a picture. It is easy enough to plot action either before or after the need for it arises. But when it comes to raising Cain two to your husband's one, and that husband has been a long

and successful cultivator of that particular crop—why, that is quite a different thing.

Besides, as it happened, Annie did not wholly lack sympathy for his next outburst, which was directed toward a tramp, a bold dirty creature who appeared one morning at the kitchen door and asked for food.

"You two Janes all by your lonesome here?" he asked, stepping in.

Wes had come into the house for another shirt—he had split the one he was wearing in a mighty bout with the grubbing hoe—and he entered the kitchen from the inner door just in time to catch the words.

He leaped and struck in one movement, and it carried the tramp and himself outside on the grass of the drying yard. The tramp was a burly man, and after the surprise of the attack he attempted to fight. He might as well have battled with a locomotive going full speed.

"What you doin' way up here, you lousy loafer?" demanded Wes between blows. "Get to hell out of here before I kill you, like you deserve, comin' into my house and scarin' women. I've a great mind to get my gun and blow you full of holes."

In two minutes the tramp was running full speed toward the road, followed by Wes, who assisted his flight with kicks whenever he could reach him. After twenty minutes or so the victor came back. His eyes were red with rage that possessed him. He did not stop to speak, but hurried out his rickety little car and was gone. Later they found out he had overtaken the tramp, fought him again, knocked him out, and then, roping him, had taken him to the nearest constable and seen him committed to jail.

But the encounter left him strange and silent for a week, and his Dean mark twitched and leaped in triumph. During that time the only notice he took of Annie was to teach her to use his rifle.

"Another tramp comes round, shoot him," he commanded.

"En in de meantime," counselled Aunt Dolcey, "it'll come in mighty handy fer you to kill off some deseyer chicken hawks what makin' so free wid our nex' crap br'ilers."

But beyond the learning how to use the gun Annie had learned something more: she added it to her knowledge that

Aunt Dolcey had once outfaced that tyrant. It was this—that Wes's rage was the same, whether the cause of it was real or imaginary.

The advancing summer, with its sultriness, its sudden evening storms shot through with flaming lightning and reverberant with the drums of thunder, brought to Annie a cessation of her purpose. She was languid, subject to whimsical desires and appetites, at times a prey to sudden nervous tears. The household work slipped back into Aunt Dolcey's faithful hands, save now and then when Annie felt more buoyant and instinct with life and energy than she had ever felt before. Then she would weed her garden or churn and print a dozen rolls of butter with a keen and vivid delight in her activity.

In the evening she and Wes walked down the long lane and looked at the wheat, wide level green plains already turning yellow; or at the corn, regiments of tall soldiers, each shako tipped with a feathery tassel. Beyond lay the woods—dark, mysterious. Little dim plants of the soil bloomed and shed faint scent along the pathway in the dewy twilight. Sometimes they sat under the wild clematis, flowering now, and that, too, was perfumed, a wild and tangy scent that did not cloy. They did not talk very much, but he was tender with her, and his fits of anger seemed forgotten.

When they did talk it was usually about the crops—the wheat. It was wonderful heavy wheat. It was the best wheat in all the neighbourhood. Occasionally they took out the little coffeepot and drove through the country and looked at other wheat, but there was none so fine as theirs.

And with the money it would bring—the golden wheat turned into gold—they would.— And now came endless dreams.

"I thought we'd sell the old coffeepot to the junkman and get a brand-new car, a good one, but now——" This was Wes.

"I think we ought to save, too. A boy'll need so many things."

"Girls don't need anything much, I suppose—oh, no!" He touched her cheek with gentle fingers.

"It's not going to be a girl."

"How d'you know?"

"I know."

So went their talk, over and over, an endless garland of happy conjectures, plans, air castles. Cousin Lorena sent little patterns and thin scraps of material, tiny laces, blue ribbons.

"I told her blue—blue's for boys," said Annie. And Wes laughed at her. It was all a blessed interlude of peace and expectancy.

The wheat was ready for harvest. From her place under the clematis vine, where she sat with her sewing, Annie could see the fields of pale gold, ready for the reaper. Wes had taken the coffeepot and gone down to the valley to see when the threshers would be able to come. In the morning he would begin to cut. Annie cocked a questioning eye at the sky, for she had already learned to watch the farmer's greatest ally and enemy—weather.

"If this good spell of weather only holds until he gets it all cut!" She remembered stories he had told her of sudden storms that flattened the ripe grain to the ground, beyond saving; of long-continued rains that mildewed it as it stood in the shocks. But if the good weather held! And there was not a cloud in the sky, nor any of those faint signs by which changing winds or clouds are forecast.

She heard the rattle and clack of the returning coffeepot, boiling up the hill at an unwonted speed. And she waved her hand to Wes as he came past; but he was bent over the wheel and did not even look round for her, only banged the little car round to the back furiously. Something in his attitude warned her, and she felt the old almost-forgotten devil of her fear leap to clutch her heart.

Presently he came round the house, and she hardly dared to look at him; she could not ask. But there was no need. He flung his hat on the ground before her with a gesture of frantic violence. When he spoke the words came in a ferment of fury:

"That skunk of a Harrison says he won't bring the thresher up here this year; claims the road's too rough and bridges are too weak for the engine."

"Oh, Wes—what'll you do?"

"Do! I'm not going to do anything! I'm not going to

haul my wheat down to him—I'll see him in hell and back again before I will."

"But our wheat!"

"The wheat can rot in the fields! I won't be bossed and blackguarded by any dirty little runt that thinks because he owns the only threshing outfit in the neighbourhood that he can run my affairs."

He raged up and down, adding invective, vituperation.

"But you can't, Wes—you can't let the wheat go to waste." For Annie had absorbed the sound creed of the country, that to waste foodstuff is a crime as heinous as murder.

"Can't I? Well, we'll see about that!"

She recognized from his tone that she had been wrong to protest; she had confirmed him in his purpose. She picked up her sewing and tried with unsteady fingers to go on with it, but she could not see the stitches for her tears. He couldn't mean it—and yet, what if he should? She looked up and out toward those still fields of precious ore, dimming under the purple shadows of twilight, and saw them a black tangle of wanton desolation. The story Aunt Dolcey had told her about the potatoes of last year was ominous in her mind.

He was sitting opposite her now, his head in his hands, brooding, sullen, the implacable vein in his forehead swollen with triumph, something brutish and hard dimming his clean and gallant youth.

"That's the way he's going to look as he gets older," thought Annie with a touch of prescience. "He's going to change into somebody else—little by little. This is the worst spell he's ever had. And all this mean blood's going to live again in my child. It goes on and on and on."

She leaned against the porch seat and struggled against the sickness of it.

"I might stand it for myself," she thought. "I might stand it for myself; but I'm not going to stand it for my baby. I'll do something—I'll take him away."

Her thoughts ran on hysterically, round and round in a coil that had no end and no beginning.

The silent fit was on Wes now. Presently, she knew, he would get up and stalk away to bed without a word. And in the morning——

It was as she expected. Without a word to her he got up

and went inside, and she heard him going up the stairs. She sat then a little longer, for the night was still and warm and beautiful, the stars very near, and the soft hush-h of the country solitude comforting to her distress.

Then she heard Unc' Zenas and Dolcey talking at the kitchen door, their voices a faint cadenced murmur; and this reminded her that she was not quite alone. She slipped round to them.

"Unc' Zenas, Wes says he's not going to cut the wheat; he'll let it rot in the fields. Seems Harrison won't send his thrasher up this far; wants us to haul to him instead."

"Marse Wes say he ain' gwine cut dat good wheat? Oh, no, Miss Annie, he cain' mean dat, sholy, sholy!"

"He said it. He's got an awful spell this time. Unc' Zenas—look—couldn't you ride the reaper if he wouldn't? Couldn't you? Once the wheat gets cut there's some chance."

"Befo' my God, Miss Annie, wid deseyer wuffless ole han's I cain' ha'dly hol' one hawss, let alone three. Oh, if I had back my stren'th lak I useter!"

The three fell into hopeless silence.

"Are the bridges so bad? Is it too hard to get the thrasher up here?" asked Annie at last. "Or was that just Harrison's excuse?"

"No, ma'am; he's got de rights. Dem ole bridges might go down mos' any time. An' dishyer road up yere, it mighty hard to navigate foh er grea' big hebby contraption lak er threshin' machine en er engine. Mos' eve'y year he gits stuck. Las' year tuk er day en er ha'f to git him out. No'm; he's got de rights."

"Yes, but, Unc' Zenas, that wheat mustn't be left go to waste."

Aunt Dolcey spoke up. "Miss Annie, honey, go git your res'—mawnin' brings light. Maybe Marse Wes'll come to his solid senses een de mawnin'. You cain' do nuffin' ter-night noway."

"No, that's so." She sighed hopelessly. "Unc' Zenas, maybe we could hire somebody else to cut the wheat if he won't."

"Miss Annie, honey, eve'ybody busy wid his own wheat—an', moreover, Marse Wes ain' gwi' let any stranger come on dis place an' cut his wheat—you know he ain'."

There seemed nothing more to say. In the darkness tears were slowly trickling down Annie's cheeks, and she could not stop them.

"Well—good-night."

"Good-night, my lamb, good-night. I gwi' name you en your tribulations in my prayers dis night."

She had never felt so abandoned, so alone. She could not even make the effort to force herself to believe that Wes would not commit this crime against all Nature; instead, she had a vivid and complete certainty that he would. She went over it and over it, lying in stubborn troubled wakefulness. She put it in clear if simple terms. If Wes persisted in his petty childish anger and wasted this wheat, it meant that they could not save the money that they had intended for the child that was coming. They would have, in fact, hardly more than their bare living left them. The ridiculous futility of it swept her from one mood to another, from courage to utter hopelessness. She remembered the first time that she had seen Wes angry, and how she had lain awake then and wondered, and dreaded. She remembered how, later, she had planned to manage him, to control him. And she had done nothing. Now it had come to this, that her child would be born in needless impoverishment; and, worse, born with the Dean curse full upon him. She clenched and unclenched her hands. The poverty she might bear, but the other was beyond her power to endure. Sleep came to her at last as a blessed anodyne.

In the first moment of the sunlit morning she forgot her trouble, but instantly she remembered, and she dressed in an agony of apprehension and wonder. Wes was gone, as was usual, for he got up before she did, to feed his cattle. She hurried into her clothes and came down, to find him stamping in to breakfast, and with the first glance at him her hope fell like a plummet.

He did mean it—he did! He did not mean to cut that wheat. She watched him as he ate, and that fine-spun desperation that comes when courage alone is not enough. that purpose that does the impossible, took hold of her.

When he had finished his silent meal he went leisurely out to the little front porch and sat down. She followed him.

"Wes Dean, you going to cut that wheat?" she demanded;

and she did not know the sound of her own voice, so high and shrill it was.

The vein in his forehead leered at her. What was she to pit her strength against a mood like this? He did not answer, did not even look at her.

"Do you mean to say you'd be so wicked—such a fool?" she went on.

Now he looked up at her with furious, threatening eyes.

"Shut your mouth and go in!" he said.

She did not move. "If you ain't going to cut it—then I am!"

She turned and started through the house, and he leaped up and followed her. In the kitchen he overtook her.

"You stay where you are! You don't go out of this house this day!" He laid a rough, restraining hand on her shoulder.

At that touch—the first harshness she had ever felt from him—something hot and flaming leaped through her. She whirled away from him and caught up Aunt Dolcey's big sharp butcher knife lying on the table; lifted it.

"You put your hands on me like that again and I'll kill you!" Her voice was not high and shrill now; she did not even raise it. "You and your getting mad! You and your rotten, filthy temper! You'd waste that wheat because you haven't got enough sense to see what a big fool you are."

She dropped the knife and walked past him, out of the kitchen, to the barn.

"Unc' Zenas," she called, "you hitch up the horses to the reaper. I'm going to cut that near field to-day myself."

"But, Miss Annie——" began the old man.

"You hitch up that team," she said. "If there ain't any men round this place, I don't know's it makes so much difference."

She waited while the three big horses were brought out and hitched to the reaper, and then she mounted grimly to the seat. She did not even look around to see if Wes might be watching. She did not answer when Unc' Zenas offered a word of direction.

"Let dat nigh horse swing round de cornahs by hisse'f, Miss Annie. He knows. An' look—here's how you drop de knife. I'll let down de bars an' foller you."

Behind her back he made frantic gestures to Dolcey to

come to him, and she ran, shuffling, shaken. Together they followed the little figure in the blue calico dress, perched high on the rattling, clacking reaper. Her hair shone in the sun like the wheat.

The near horse knew the game, knew how to lead the others. That was Annie's salvation. As she swung into the field she had a struggle with the knife, but it dropped into place, and the first of the golden harvest fell before it squarely, cleanly; the stubble was even behind it. She watched the broad backs of her team, a woman in a dream. She did not know how she drove them; the lines were heavy in her hands, dragged at her arms. It was hot, and sweat rolled down her forehead. She wished vaguely that she had remembered to put on her sunbonnet.

Behind her came Unc' Zenas and Aunt Dolcey, setting the sheaves into compact, well-capped stooks, little rough golden castles to dot this field of amazing conflict.

And now the reaper had come to the corner. Unc' Zenas straightened himself and watched anxiously. But his faith in the near horse was justified—the team turned smoothly, Annie lifted the blade and dropped it, and they started again, only half visible now across the tall grain.

Annie's wrists and back ached unbearably, the sweat got in her eyes, but she drove on. She thought a little of Wes, and how he had looked when she picked up that butcher knife. She thought of his heavy hand on her shoulder, and her flesh burned where he had grasped it.

"I'm going to cut this wheat if it kills me." she said over and over to herself in a queer refrain. "I'm going to cut this wheat if it kills me!" She thought probably it would. But she drove on.

She made her second corner successfully, and now the sun was at her back, and that gave her a little ease. This wheat was going to be cut, and hauled to the thrasher, and sold in the market, if she did every bit of the work herself. She would show Wes Dean! Let him try to stop her—if he dared!

And there would be money enough for everything the baby might want or might need. Her child should not be born to poverty and skimping. If only the sun didn't beat so hard on the back of her neck! If only her arms didn't ache so!

After countless hours of time she overtook Dolcey and Zenas, and the old woman divined her chief discomfort. She snatched the sunbonnet off her own head and handed it up to her.

"Marster in hebben, ef I only had my stren'th!" muttered Zenas as she went on.

"Angels b'arin' dat chile up wid deir wings," chanted Aunt Dolcey. Then, descending to more mundane matters, she added a delighted chuckle: "I knowed she'd rise en shine one dese days. Holler at Marse Wes she did, name him names, plenty. Yessuh—laid him out!"

"What you s'pose he up to now?" asked Zenas, looking over his shoulder.

"I dunno—but I bet you he plumb da'nted. Zenas, lak I tol' you—man may hab plenty debbilment, rip en t'ar, but he'll stan' back whenas a ooman meks up her min' she stood enough." And Aunt Dolcey had never heard of Rudyard Kipling's famous line.

"Dat chile might kill he'se'f."

"When yo' mad yo' kin 'complish de onpossible, en it doan' hurt yo'," replied Dolcey, thus going Kipling one better.

But she watched Annie anxiously.

The girl held out, though the jolting and shaking racked her excruciatingly and the pull of the reins seemed to drag the very flesh from her bones. Now and then the golden field swam dark before her eyes, the backs of the horses swelled to giant size and blotted out the sun. But she kept on long after her physical strength was gone; her endurance held her. Slowly, carefully, the machine went round and round the field, and the two bent old figures followed.

And so they came to mid-morning. They had long since ceased to look or care for any sign of the young master of the land. None of them noticed him, coming slowly, slowly from the stables, coming slowly, slowly to the field's edge and standing there, watching with unbelieving, sullen eyes the progress of the reaper, the wavering arms that guided the horses, the little shaken blue figure that sat high in the driver's seat. But he was there.

It is said of criminals that a confession can often be extracted by the endless repetition of one question alone; they cannot bear the pressure of its monotony. Perhaps it was

the monotony of the measured rattle and clack of the machine going on so steadily that finally impelled Wes Dean, after his long frowning survey of the scene, to vault the low stone wall and approach it.

Annie did not check the horses when she saw him; she did not even look at him. But he looked at her, and in her white face, with the dreary circles of utter fatigue shadowing her eyes, his defeat was completed. He put his hand on the bit of the nearest horse and stopped the team.

Then she looked at him, as one looks at a loathsome stranger.

"What you want?" she asked coldly.

He swallowed hard. "Annie—I'll—I'll cut the wheat, le'me lift you down off there." He held out his arms.

She did not budge. "You going to cut it all—and haul it down to the thresher?"

"Yes—yes, I will. Gee, you look near dead—get down, honey. You go in the house and lay down—I'm afraid you'll kill yourself. I'm afraid you'll hurt—him some way."

Still she did not move. "I'd ruther be dead than live with a man that acts like you do," she said. "Grown up, and can't handle his temper."

Something in her quiet, cold scorn struck through to him and cut away forever his childish satisfaction with himself. A new manhood came into his face; his twitching, sinister vein was still. Surrender choked him, but he managed to get it out:

"I know I acted like a fool. But I can't let you do this. I'll—I'll try to——"

The words died on his lips and he leaped forward in time to catch her as she swayed and fell, fainting.

An hour later Annie lay on the lounge in the sitting room, still aching with terrible weariness, but divinely content. Far away she could hear the steady susurrus of the reaper, driven against the golden wheat, and the sound was a promise and a song to her ears. She looked up now and then at the pictured face of Wes's father, frowning and passionate, and the faint smile of a conqueror curved her tired mouth. For she had found and proved the strongest thing in the world, and she would never again know fear.

THE TRIBUTE

By HARRY ANABLE KNIFFIN

From Brief Stories

THE Little Chap reached up a chubby hand to the door-knob. A few persistent tugs and twists and it turned in his grasp. Slowly pushing the door open, he stood hesitating on the threshold of the studio.

The Big Chap looked up from his easel by the window. His gray eyes kindled into a kindly smile, its welcoming effect offset by an admonitory headshake. "Not now, Son," he said. "I'm busy."

"Can't I stay a little while, Daddy?" The sturdy little legs carried their owner across the floor as he spoke. "I'll be quiet, like—like I was asleep."

The Big Chap hesitated, looking first at his canvas and then at the small replica of himself standing before him.

"I got on my new pants," the youngster was saying, conversationally easing the embarrassment of a possible capitulation. "Mummy says I ought to be proud of them, and because I'm five years old."

The artist looked gravely down at him. "Proud, Son?" he asked, in the peculiar way he had of reasoning with the Little Chap. "Have you reached the age of five because of anything you have done? Or did you acquire the trousers with money you earned?"

The Little Chap looked up at him questioningly. He had inherited his father's wide gray eyes, and at present their expression was troubled. Then, evidently seeking a more easily comprehended topic, his eyes left his father's and sought the canvas on which was depicted a court scene of mediæval times. "Who is that, Daddy?" His small index finger pointed to the most prominent figure in the painting.

His father continued to regard him thoughtfully. "One of England's proud kings, Son."

"And what did *he* do to be proud of?" came quickly from the youthful inquisitioner.

A hearty laugh escaped the artist. "Bully for you, Son! That's a poser! Aside from taxing the poor and having enemies beheaded, I'm puzzled to know what he really did do to earn his high position."

The Little Chap squirmed himself between his father's knees and started to scale the heights to his lap, where he finally settled down with a sigh of comfort. "Tell me a story about him," he said eagerly. "A story with castles, 'n' wars, 'n' everything."

The artist's gaze rested on the kingly figure in the picture, then wandered away to the window through which he seemed to lose himself in scenes of a far-distant time.

"I'll tell you a story, Son," he began, slowly and ruminatingly, "of how Loyalty and Service stormed the Stronghold of Honour and Splendour. This proud king you see in the picture lived part of the time in the great castle of Windsor, and the balance of the year in Saint James's Palace in London."

"It must have cost him a lot for rent," wisely interpolated the Little Chap.

"No, the people paid the rent, Son. Some of them were glad to do it, for they looked upon their king as a superior being. Among this class of loyal subjects was an old hatter, very poor and humble."

"What was his name?" asked the Little Chap, apparently greatly interested.

"He had no name. People in those olden days were known by their trade or calling. So he was simply called 'the hatter'."

"And did he make nice hats?"

"I've no doubt he did, Son. But you mustn't interrupt. Well, the hatter paid his tithes, or taxes, after which, I dare say, he had little enough left to live on. But he appeared not to mind. And whenever the King and Queen rode through the streets in their gilded coach of state, his cracked old voice would cheer lustily, and his hoary head would be bared in deepest reverence."

"Didn't he ever catch cold?"

"Hush, Son, I'm telling a story! As the hatter grew older he lost his wits and became quite crazy on the subject of his king. He yearned to do something to prove his loyalty. And whenever England engaged in a war, and a proclamation was issued calling for men to fight for King and country, he would be one of the first to volunteer. But they never accepted him, of course, because he was so old.

"With the passing of the years the Queen died, and the King decided to marry again. Great preparations for the ceremony were begun at Westminster Abbey, where the wedding was to take place. The old hatter became greatly excited when he heard the news. His addled wits presently hit upon a wonderful scheme by which he could both honour and serve his sovereign: *He would make the King a hat to wear at his wedding!*"

"I guess he must 've been a good hatter, after all," the Little Chap murmured, in a tone of conviction.

"Perhaps, in his time," his father conceded. "But you must remember he now was old and foolish. His materials were merely such odds and ends as he could gather together, and the result was very disreputable-looking. But in his rheumy old eyes it was the most wonderful hat ever designed for a monarch. He carefully wrapped it in a soiled old cloth and started out to present it to the King. At the palace gates the guards refused him admittance, and cruelly laughed in his face. He tried every means he could think of to have the hat reach its destination. Once he stopped the Court Chamberlain on the street, only to be rebuked for his pains. Another time he waylaid a peer, as he left the House of Lords, and was threatened with arrest. Foiled in all his attempts, the cracked-brained old fellow impatiently awaited the wedding ceremony. At last the great day arrived. All the bells of old London were ringing blithely as the gilded coach, drawn by ten white horses, deposited the King at Westminster Abbey. In the forefront of the vast throng surrounding the entrance stood the hatter."

"And did he have the hat with him?" asked the Little Chap.

"Yes, Son, he had it with him. And when the King entered the portals of the ancient Abbey, the hatter somehow

broke through the line of guards and ran after him crying, 'Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Deign to accept this token of a loyal subject's regard!'

"The King turned in surprise. And when he saw the ragged old fellow tending him the ridiculous-looking hat, he flew into a great rage and cried angrily: 'How comes this varlet here, interrupting his Sovereign's nuptials and desecrating our Tomb of Kings? Away with him to prison, and let him repent his insolence as he rots in a dungeon!'"

"Why did he do that, Daddy?"

"The Sovereign, Son, was a very proud king, while the hatter was both poor and humble. And at his words the guards hurried forward and hustled the old man out of the Abbey, where his presence was an insult to the Great. In the struggle the hat rolled into the gutter, and one of the King's white horses put his hoof through it. The hatter cried like a child when he saw the work of his loving hands thus ruined. But they carried him off to prison and kept him shut up there until he died and paid the penalty for his crime of desecrating the Abbey."

"Oh, the poor old hatter! But is that the end of the story, Daddy?" The Little Chap's disappointment was markedly pronounced.

"No, Son, there is a little more to come. I meant to tell you that the hatter had reared a large family of boys. His sons all married and, in turn, raised large families. These numerous relatives or kin took the name of Hatterskin. In course of time that became shortened to Hatkins, and so remained until the British habit of dropping their H's reduced it to Atkins.

"At last the proud King died and was buried with great ceremony in the Abbey. Year followed year, and century succeeded century. England, although blessed with a Royal pair both humane and good, was ruled by an even wiser monarch—the Sovereign People.

"Then came an August day when the black thunder-cloud of war darkened her smiling horizon. Four bloody, terrible years the conflict lasted. And when at last an armistice was signed, the stricken people went wild with joy."

The Big Chap's gaze returned to the canvas with its scene of mediæval splendour. A mystic light smouldered in his

eyes as, unconscious of his surroundings and his youthful auditor, he continued: "On the second anniversary of that happy day an unprecedented thing happened. Before the ancient Abbey a gun carriage, bearing the flag-draped casket of an unidentified warrior, came to rest on the very spot where the gilded coach of the proud King once had stopped. Again the square was crowded, as on that day in the long ago when the poor hatter foolishly tried to honour his sovereign. The traditions of centuries toppled when the body of the unknown soldier passed through those storied portals followed by the King of England as chief mourner. In the dim, historic chapel the king stood, in advance of princes, prime ministers, and the famous leaders of both army and navy. Like the humble hatter of old his royal head was reverently bared as the nameless hero was laid among the silent company of England's illustrious dead. 'The Boast of Heraldry and the Pomp of Power' bowed in silent homage before the remains of a once common soldier. Thus Loyalty and Service eventually stormed the Stronghold of Honour and Splendour!"

For a moment there was an impressive, brooding silence, broken presently by the Little Chap. "And what was the soldier's name, Daddy?"

Recalled from his revery, the father answered:

"He was known, Son, as Tommy Atkins."

The Little Chap's brow was puckered in thought. At last he laughed delightedly and clapped his hands. "Was the soldier, Daddy, one of the hatter's family—the poor old hatter who was thrown out of the Abbey?"

The Big Chap lifted the child from his lap and placed him on his feet. Then he picked up a brush and turned to his painting.

"I like to think so, Son. But only God knows."

THE GETAWAY

By O. F. LEWIS

From Red Book

OLD Man Anderson, the lifer, and Detroit Jim, the best second-story man east of the Mississippi, lay panting side by side in the pitch-dark dugout, six feet beneath the surface of the prison yard. They knew their exact position to be twenty feet south of the north wall, and, therefore, thirty feet south of the slate sidewalk outside the north wall.

It had taken the twain three months and twenty-one days to achieve the dugout. Although there was always a guard somewhere on the north wall, the particular spot where the dugout had come into being was sheltered from the wall-guard's observation by a small tool-house. Also whenever the pair were able to dig, which was only at intervals, a bunch of convicts was always perched on the heap of dirt from various legitimate excavations within the yard, which Fate had piled up at that precise spot. The earth from the dugout and the earth from these other diggings mixed admirably.

Nor, likewise because of the dirt-pile, could any one detect the job from the south end of the yard. If a guard appeared from around the mat-shop or coming out of the Principal Keeper's office, the convicts sunning themselves on the dirt-pile in the free hour of noon, or late in the afternoon, after the shops had closed, spoke with motionless lips to the two diggers. Plenty of time was thus afforded to shove a couple of boards over the aperture, kick dirt over the boards, and even push a barrow over the dugout's entrance—and there you were!

One minute before this narrative opens, on July 17th, a third convict had dropped the boards over the hole into which Old Man Anderson, the lifer, and Detroit Jim, had crawled. This convict had then frantically kicked dirt over the boards,

had clawed down still more dirt, to make sure nothing could be seen of the hole—had made the thing look just like part of the big dirt-pile indeed—and then had legged it to the ball-game now in progress on this midsummer Saturday afternoon, at the extreme south end of the yard, behind the mat-shop.

Dirt trickled down upon the gray hair of Old Man Anderson in the dark and stuffy hole he shared with his younger companion. But the darkness and the stuffiness and the filtering dirt were unsensed. Something far more momentous was in the minds of both. How soon would Slattery, the prison guard, whom they knew to be lying dead in the alley between the foundry and the tool-shop, be found? For years Slattery had been a fairly good friend to Old Man Anderson, but what did that count in the face of his becoming, for all his friendship, a last-minute and totally unexpected impediment to the get-away? He had turned into the alley just when Old Man Anderson and Detroit Jim were crouching for the final jump to the dugout! A blow—a thud—that was all. . . .

Anderson lay now, staring wide-eyed into the black nothing of the hole. For the second time he had killed a man, and God knew he hadn't intended to—either time! Fourteen years ago a man had tried to get his wife away from him, while he was serving a one-year bit in the county jail. Both men had had guns, and Old Man Anderson had killed the other or he would have been killed himself. So that was no murder at all! And as for Slattery—big, heavy, slow-moving, red-faced Slattery—Old Man Anderson would even have gone out of his way to do the guard a favour, under ordinary circumstances. But as between Slattery and the chance to escape—that was different.

Old Man Anderson rubbed his right hand in the dirt and held it before his eyes in the blackness. He knew that the moisture on it was Slattery's blood. The iron pipe in Old Man Anderson's hands had struck Slattery on the head just once, but once was enough.

Old Man Anderson burst into hiccoughing sobs. The younger convict punched him in the ribs, and swore at him in muffled tones. Anderson stifled his sobs then, but continued to sniffle and shiver. This time it would absolutely be The Chair for him—if they got him! In a few minutes they couldn't help discovering Slattery. Anderson never could

give himself up now, however this business of the dugout and the hoped-for old sewer conduit should finally turn out. In the beginning he had counted on crawling out, if worst came to worst, and surrendering. But to crawl out now meant but one thing—The Chair!

In all his fourteen years behind the walls the vision of The Chair had terrorized the old man. When they had sent him to prison his first cell had been in the death-house, separated from The Chair only by a corridor that, they told him, was about twenty feet long, and took no more than five seconds to traverse—with the priest. Until they changed his cell, the gaunt, terrible Thing in the next room edged every day nearer, nearer, nearer, looming, growing, broadening before his morbid vision until it seemed to have cut off from his sight everything else in the world—closer, closer until it was only seven incredible hours away! Then had come the commutation of his sentence from death to life!

The next day Old Man Anderson, gray-haired even then, went out from the death-house among his gray-clad fellows, but straight into the prison hospital, where for three months he lay a victim of chair-shock just as surely as was ever a man shell-shocked on the Flanders front. And never since had the hands of the man wholly ceased to quiver and to shake.

Now he was a murderer for the second time! In the blackness he stretched out his hand, and ran it over a stack of tin cans. Detroit Jim had been mighty clever! Canned food from the storehouse, enough to last perhaps two weeks! Detroit Jim had had a storehouse job. Twice a day, during the last ten days, the wiry little ferret-faced second-story man had got away with at least one can from the prison commissary. Also he had provided matches, candles, and even a cranky little flashlight. Only chewing tobacco, because you can smell smoke a long way when you are hunting escaped convicts. And a can of water half the size of an ash can!

Despair fastened upon Old Man Anderson, and a wave of sickness swept over him. All the food in the world wouldn't bring Slattery back to life. And again that Thing in the death-house rose before his mind's eyes. Throughout all the years he had carried a kind of dread that sometime a governor might come along who would put back his sentence where it had been at first—and then all his good behaviour in these

endless years would count for nothing. Until Detroit Jim had told him about the long-forgotten sewer conduit, he had never even thought to disobey the prison rules.

The old man's teeth chattered. Detroit Jim's thin fingers tugged at his sleeve. That meant getting busy, and digging with the pick with the sawed-off handle. So Anderson wriggled into the horizontal chamber, which was just large enough to permit his body and arms to function.

As he hacked away at the damp earth, he could see in the pitch darkness the dirty sheet of paper, now in Detroit Jim's pocket, upon which their very life depended. It was a tracing made by a discharged convict from a dusty leather-covered book in the public library in New York, sent in by the underground to Jim. The book had contained the report of some forgotten architect, back in the fifties of the last century, and the diagram in his report showed the water and sewage conduit—in use! It ran from the prison building, right down across the yard, six feet under ground, and out under the north wall, under the street outside, and finally into the river. Built of brick, four feet wide, four feet high. A ready-made tunnel to freedom!

Old Man Anderson could hear Detroit Jim's hoarse whisper now, as he chopped away at the dirt, which he shoved back under his stomach, to where Jim's fingers caught it and thrust it farther back.

"We're only a couple of feet from that old conduit right now. Dig, you son of a gun, dig! Can the sniffin'! You dig, and then I'll dig!"

They were saving their matches and candles against necessity. Mechanically the old man chopped and hacked at the wall of earth in front of him. Now and then the pick would encounter a stone or some other hard substance. In the last few days they had come upon frequent pieces of old brick. Detroit Jim had rejoiced over these signs. For the old man every falling clod of earth seemed to bring him nearer to freedom. They also took his mind off Slattery.

So he chopped away, how long he did not know. Suddenly his pick struck an obstacle again. He hacked at it. It gave slightly. A third time he struck it, and it seemed to recede. An odour of mouldy air filled his nostrils. In that little aperture his pick touched nothing now! He heard

something fall! Then he knew! There was a hollow place in front of them! The abandoned conduit? He stifled a shout.

From somewhere, muffled at first, but ultimately faintly strident, rose a prolonged wail that seemed to issue from the very earth. The sound rose, and fell, and rose again. Frantically the pick of Old Man Anderson hacked away at the dirt, and then at whatever was in front of him. Detroit Jim snapped the feeble flashlight then. It was a wall—the conduit wall!

Meantime, the prison siren shrieked out to the countryside the news of an escape.

What time it was—whether night or day or what day, neither Jim nor Old Man Anderson knew. They had slept, of course, and Jim had forgotten to wind his watch. Had one week or two weeks passed? If two weeks had slipped by and if the prison officers ran true to form they would by now have ceased searching inside the prison walls.

Old Man Anderson and Detroit Jim huddled close to each other in the darkness of the conduit. A hundred times they had crawled from one end to the other of their vaultlike trap! In their desperate and fruitless search for an outlet to the conduit they had burned many matches and several candles. Besides, Old Man Anderson had required light in which to fight off his attacks of nerves, and the last of the candles had gone for that. Now total darkness enveloped them.

The conduit was blocked! By earth at one end, and by a brick wall at the other! All along the winding hundred feet of vault they had hacked out brick after brick only to encounter solid earth behind. Only a few tins of food remained and the water was wholly gone; the liquid from the food cans only served to increase their thirst.

Old Man Anderson had grown to loathe Detroit Jim. Every word he murmured, every movement he made, intensified the loathing. He had made up his mind that Jim was planning to desert him the next time he should fall asleep; perhaps would kill him and leave him there—in the dark. The two had practically ceased speaking to each other. In his mental confusion Old Man Anderson kept revolving in his mind, with satisfaction, a new plan he had evolved. The next time Jim should fall asleep he would crawl back through the aperture

in the conduit wall, pry up the boards over the opening into the prison yard, wriggle out, and take his chances in getting over the wall somehow! Better even be shot by a guard than die like a rat in this unspeakable place, as he was doing, where he couldn't stand up and dared not lie down on account of the things that were forever crawling through the place! His contemplation of his plan was broken in upon by his companion clutching him spasmodically by the arm. The old man's cry died in his throat.

Footsteps! Dull and distant they were, and somewhere above them—momentarily more distinct—receding—gone!

Detroit Jim pulled Anderson's head toward him, and whispered:

"Sidewalk! People going by! We've never sat right here before! We wouldn't hear them if they weren't walking on stone, or slate, or something hard!"

The old man's heart pounded like a trip-hammer. Detroit Jim seized the pick and began to pry the bricks loose from the arched roof of the conduit. They worked like mad, picking, hacking, pulling, piling the bricks softly down on the conduit floor.

Once, for an instant, Jim stopped working. "How far from the hole we came in through, do you think we are?" he whispered.

"'Bout a hundred feet, I guess," answered the old man. "Why?"

Without replying Detroit Jim resumed his picking, picking, at the bricks. A hundred feet from where they had entered would not be under the sidewalk. Finally, he understood. This conduit wound around a good deal; it would take a hundred winding feet to cover thirty straightaway.

Finally, also, Detroit Jim turned the pick over to the old man, who, feeling in the blackness with his hands, discovered the span as wide as his outstretched arms, from which Detroit Jim had removed the bricks. It was a span of yielding earth into which the old man now dug his pick. As he worked, the loosened dirt fell upon him, upon his head, into his eyes and nose and ears. . . .

Abruptly the old man's pick struck the flagging above them! Detroit Jim mounted upon the pile of bricks and shoved Anderson aside.

Jim felt along the edges of the stone clear around. It seemed to measure about three feet by two, and to be of slate, and probably held in place only by its contact with other stones, or by cement between the stones. No light appeared through the crevices. Detroit Jim took from his pocket a huge pocket-knife and with the longest blade poked up between the main stone and the one adjoining. The blade met resistance.

Ultimately, and abruptly, however, the blade shot through to the hilt of the knife. Jim drew it back instantly. No light came through the crevice.

"I smell good air," he whispered, "but I can't see a thing. It must be night!"

They knew now what to do. The flagging must be removed at once, before any one should go by! The hole would be big enough to let them out! Old Man Anderson's heart leaped. It was over. They had won. Trust him to go where they'd never get him for the Slattery business! As for Detroit Jim, he already knew the next big trick that he would pull off—out in Cleveland!

Ultimately, as Detroit Jim worked upon it, the stone began to sag. An edge caught upon the adjacent flagging. The two men, perched upon the wobbly bricks, manipulated the stone, working it loose, until, finally, it came crashing down.

The stone had made noise enough, it seemed, to wake the dead; yet above them there was no sound. Swiftly they raised the flagging and set it securely upon the heap of bricks. When Detroit Jim stood upon this improvised platform his head was level with the aperture they had made. He could see no sky, no stars, could feel no wind, discover no light such as pervades even the darkest night.

"Good God!" he breathed. His fingers went out over the flagging. His knife dropped. The tinkle echoed dully down the conduit. He stooped to where Old Man Anderson stood, breathing hard.

"It's a—a room!" he whispered.

"A—a room?" repeated Old Man Anderson dully.

"Come! After me! Up! I'll pull you up!"

Detroit Jim, being wiry, swung himself up, and then bent down, groping for the old man's hands. Winded, panting,

exhausted, the two men stood at last in this new blackness, clutching each other, their ears strained to catch the slightest sound.

"For God's sake, don't fall down that hole now!" hissed Detroit Jim. "Listen. We'll both crawl together till we get to a wall. Then you feel along one way, and whisper to me what you find, and I'll crawl the other. Look for a window or a door—some way out! We'll come together finally. Are you ready?"

"I'm—I'm afraid," whined the old man.

Detroit Jim's fingers dug into the other's arm, and he pulled the latter along. Their groping hands touched a wall—a wall of wood. Detroit Jim stood up and pulled Anderson beside him. He felt the old man shiver. He shoved him gently in to the left and himself moved cautiously to the right, slowly, catlike.

Finally, Jim came to a door. He could perceive no light through the chinks in the door. Sensing the increasing uncanniness of a room without windows, without furniture, with flagging for a floor, he turned the knob of the door gently, and it gave under his touch.

Just then there came to him a hoarse whisper from across the room. It made him jump. "I've—I've found some wires," the old man was saying, "in a cable running along the floor——"

"See where they lead!" Detroit Jim was breathless, in anticipation.

And then, shattering the overwhelming tension of the moment, shrilled, suddenly, a horrible, prolonged, piercing shriek ending in a gasp and the sound of a heavy body falling to the floor! What, in God's name, had happened to the old man? And that yell was enough to awaken the entire world!

Detroit Jim groped his way across the room. He could hear now no further sound from the old man. . . . Steps outside! He sank upon his knees, his hands outstretched. He heard a lock turn; then following upon a click the whole universe went white, and dazzling and scorching!

He raised one arm to his blinking, throbbing eyes. A rough voice shouted: "Hands up!"

There was a rush of feet, the rough clutch of hands at his shoulders. . . . Presently he found himself blinking

down upon the fear-contorted face of Old Man Anderson, dirt-streaked, bearded, gaunt, dead!

Slowly his eyes crawled beyond the body on the floor . . . Before him, its empty arms stretched toward him, its straps and wires twisting snakily in front of him, was The Chair!

"AURORE"

By ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD

From *Pictorial Review*

YOUR name!—*Votre nom?*" Crossman added, for in the North Country not many of the habitants are bilingual.

She looked at him and smiled slowly, her teeth white against cardinal-flower lips.

"Ma name? Aurore," she answered in a voice as mystically slow as her smile, while the mystery of her eyes changed and deepened.

Crossman watched her, fascinated. She was like no woman he had ever seen, radiating a personality individual and strange. "Aurore," he repeated. "You're not the dawn, you know; not a bit like it." He did not expect her to own to any knowledge of the legend of her name, but she nodded her head understandingly.

"It was the Curé name' me so," she explained. "But the Curé and me," she shrugged, "never could—how you say?—see—hear—one the other—so, I would not be a blonde just for spite to him—I am a very black dawn, *n'est-ce, pas?*"

"A black dawn," he repeated. Her words unleashed his fancy—her heavy brows and lashes, her satiny raven hair, her slow voice that seemed made of silence, her eyes that changed in expression so rapidly that they dizzied one with a sense of space. "Black Dawn!" He stared at her long, which in no wise disconcerted her.

"Will you want, then, Antoine and me?" she asked at length.

He woke from his dream with a savage realization that, most surely, he wanted her. "Yes. Of course—you—and Antoine. Wait, *attendez*, don't go yet."

"Why not?" she smiled. "I have what I came for."

Her hand was on the door-latch. The radiance from the opened door of the square, old-fashioned stove shimmered over her fur cap and intensified the broad scarlet stripes of her mackinaw. In black corduroy trousers, full and bagging as a moujik's, she stood at ease, her feet small and dainty even in the heavy caribou-hide boots.

"*Bon soir, monsieur,*" she said. "In two days we go with you to camp—me—and Antoine."

"Wait!" he cried, but she had opened the door. He rose with a start, and, ignoring the intense cold, followed her till the stinging breath of the North stabbed him with the recollection of its immutable power. All about him the night was radiant. Of a sudden the sky was hung with banners—banners that rippled and folded and unfolded, banners of rainbows, long, shaking loops of red and silver, ghosts of lost emeralds and sapphires, oriflammes that fluttered in the heavens, swaying across the world in mysterious majesty. Immensity, Silence, Mystery—The Northern Lights! "Aurora!" he called into the night, "Aurora—Borealis!"

The Curé of Portage Dernier drove up to the log-cabin office and shook himself from his blankets; his *soutane* was rolled up around his waist and secured with safety-pins; his solid legs were encased in the heaviest of woollen trousers and innumerable long stockings. His appearance was singularly divided—clerical above, under the long wool-lined cape, and "lay" below. Though the thermometer showed a shockingly depressed figure, the stillness and the warmth of the sun, busy at diamond-making in the snow, gave the feeling of spring.

The sky was inconceivably blue. The hard-frozen world was one immaculate glitter, the giant evergreens standing black against its brightness. The sonorous ring of axes on wood, the gnawing of saws, the crunching of runners, the crackling crash of distant trees falling to the woodsmen's onslaughts—Bijou Falls logging-camp was a vital centre of joyous activity.

The Curé grinned and rubbed his mittened hands. "Hé—Hola!" he called.

At his desk in the north window Crossman heard the hail, and went to the door. At sight of the singular padded figure

his face lifted in a grin. "Come in, Father," he exclaimed; "be welcome."

"Ah," said the Priest, his pink face shining with benevolence, "I thank you. Where is my friend, that good Jakapa? I am on my monthly circuit, and I thought to see what happens at the Falls of the Bijou." He stepped inside the cabin and advanced to the stove with outstretched hands. "I have not the pleasure," he said tentatively.

"My name is Crossman," the other answered. "I am new to the North."

"Ah, so? I am the Curé of Portage Dernier, but, as you see, I must wander after my lambs—very great goats are they, many of them, and the winter brings the logging. So I, too, take to the timber. My team," he waved an introducing hand at the two great cross-bred sled-dogs that unhooked from their traces had followed him in and now sat gravely on their haunches, staring at the fire. "You are an overseer for the company?" suggested the Curé, politely curious—"or perhaps you cruise?"

Crossman shook his head. "No, *mon père*. I came up here to get well."

"Ah," said the Curé, sympathetically tapping his lung. "In this air of the evergreens and the new wood, in the clean cold—it is the world's sanatorium—you will soon be yourself again."

Crossman smiled painfully. "Perhaps *here*"—he laid a long, slender finger on his broad chest—"but I heal not easily of the great world sickness—the War. It has left its mark! The War, the great malady of the world."

"You are right." Meditatively the Priest threw aside his cape and began unfastening the safety-pins that held up his cassock. "You say well. It strikes at the *heart*."

Crossman nodded.

"Yet it passes, my son, and Nature heals; as long as the hurt be in Nature, Nature will take care. And you have come where Nature and God work together. In this great living North Country, for sick bodies and sick souls, the good God has His good sun and His clean winds." He nodded reassurance, and Crossman's dark face cleared of its brooding.

"Sit down, Father." He advanced a chair.

"So," murmured the Curé, continuing his thought as he sank into the embrace of thong and withe "So you were in the War, and did you take hurt there, my son?"

Crossman nodded. "Trench pneumonia, and then the rat at the lung; but of shock, something also. But I think it was not concussion, as the doctors said, but *soul*-shock. It has left me, Father, like Mohammed's coffin, suspended. I think I have lost my grip on the world—and not found my hold on another."

"Shock of the soul," the Priest ruminated. "Your soul is bruised, my son. We must take care of it." His voice trailed off. There was silence in the little office broken only by the yawn and snuffle of the sled-dogs.

Suddenly the door swung open. In the embrasure stood Aurore in her red mackinaw and corduroy trousers. A pair of snowshoes hung over her back, and her hand gripped a short-handled broad axe. Her great eyes turned from Crossman to the Curé, and across her crimson mouth crept her slow smile. The Curé sprang to his feet at sight of her, his face went white, and the lines from nose to lips seemed to draw in.

"Aurore!" he exclaimed; "Aurore!"

"*Où, mon père,*" she drawled. "It is Aurore." She struck a provocative pose, her hand on her hip, her head thrown back, while her eyes changed colour as alexandrite in the sun.

The Curé turned on Crossman. "What is this woman to you?"

Her eyes defied him. "Tell him," she jeered. "What *am* I to you?"

"She is here with Antoine Marceau, the log-brander," Crossman answered unsteadily. "She takes care of our cabin, Jakapa's and mine."

"Is that *all*?" the Priest demanded.

Her eyes challenged him. What, indeed, was she to him? What *was* she? From the moment he had followed her into the boreal night, with its streaming lights of mystery and promise, she had held his imagination and his thoughts.

"Is that *all*?" the Priest insisted.

"You insult both this girl and me," Crossman retorted, stung to sudden anger.

"*Dieu merci !*" the Curé made the sign of the cross as he spoke. "As for this woman, send her away. She is *not* the wife of Antoine Marceau; she is not married—she *will* not be."

In spite of himself a savage joy burned in Crossman's veins. She was the wife of no man; she was a free being, whatever else she was.

"I do not have to marry," she jeered. "That is for the women that only one man desires—or perhaps two—like some in your parish, *mon père*."

"She is evil," the Priest continued, paying no attention to her sneering comment. "I know not what she is, nor who. One night, in autumn, in the dark of the hour before morning, she was brought to me by some Indians. They had found her, a baby, wrapped in furs, in an empty canoe, rocking almost under the Grande Falls. But I tell you, and to my sorrow, I *know*, she is evil. She knows not God, nor God her. You, whose soul is sick, flee her as you would the devil! Aurore, the Dawn! I named her, because she came so near the morning. Aurore! Ah, God! She should be named after the blackest hour of a witch's Sabbath!"

She laughed. It was the first time Crossman had heard her laugh—a deep, slow, far-away sound, more like an eerie echo.

"*He* has a better name for me," she said, casting Crossman a look whose intimacy made his blood run hot within him. "'The Black Dawn'—*n'est-ce-pas ?* Though I *have* heard him call me in the night—by another name," with which equivocal statement she swung the axe into the curve of her arm, turned on her heel, and softly closed the door between them.

The Priest turned on him. "My son," his eyes searched Crossman's, "you have not lied to me?"

"No," he answered steadily. "Once I called her the Aurora Borealis—that is all. To me she seems mysterious and changing, and coloured, like the Northern Lights."

"She is mysterious and changing and beautiful, but it is not the lights of the North and of Heaven. She is the *feu follet*, the will-o'-the-wisp that hovers over what is rotten, and dead. Send her away, my son; send her away. Oh, she has left her trail of blood and hatred and malice in my parish,

I know. She has bred feuds; she has sent strong men to the devil, and broken the hearts of good women. But *you* will not believe me. It is to Jakapa I must talk. *Mon Dieu!* how is it that he let her come! You are a stranger, but he——”

“Jakapa wished for Antoine, and she was with him,” explained Crossman uneasily, yet resentful of the Priest’s vehemence.

“I can not wait.” The Curé rose and began repinning his clerical garments. “Where is Jakapa? Have you a pair of snowshoes to lend me? You must forgive my agitation, Monsieur, but you do not understand—I—which way?”

“He should be at Mile End, just above the Bijou. Sit still, Father; I will send for him. The wind sets right. I’ll call him in.” Slipping on his beaver jacket, he stepped outside and struck two blows on the great iron ring, a bent rail, that swung from its gibbet like a Chinese gong. A singing roar, like a metal bellow, sprang into the clear, unresisting air, leaped and echoed, kissed the crags of the Bijou and recoiled again, sending a shiver of sound and vibration through snow-laden trees, on, till the echoes sighed into silence. Crossman’s over-sensitive ear clung to the last burring whisper as it answered, going north, north, to the House of Silence, drawn there by the magnet of Silence, as water seeks the sea. For a moment he had almost forgotten the reason for the smitten clamour, hypnotized by the mystery of sound. Then he turned, to see Aurore, a distant figure of scarlet and black at the edge of the wood road, shuffling northward on her long snowshoes, northward, as if in pursuit of the sound that had gone before. She raised a mittened hand to him in ironic salutation. She seemed to beckon, north—north—into the Silence. Crossman shook himself. What was this miasma in his heart? He inhaled the vital air and felt the rush of his blood in answer, realizing the splendour of this beautiful, intensely living world of white and green, of sparkle and prismatic brilliance. Its elemental power like the urge of the world’s youth.

But Aurore? His brain still heard the echo of her laugh. He cursed savagely under his breath, and turned his back upon the Curé, unable to face the scrutiny of those kind, troubled eyes.

"Jakapa will be here presently," he said over his shoulder. "That gong carries ten miles if there's no wind. One ring, that's for the Boss; two, call in for the whole gang; three, alarm—good as a telegraph or the telephone as far as it goes. Meanwhile, if you'll excuse me, I'll have a look at the larder."

Without a doubt, he reasoned, Aurore would have left their mid-day meal ready. She would not return, he knew, until the guest had gone. In the little overheated cook-house he found the meal set out. All was in order. Then his eye caught a singular decoration fastened to the door, a paper silhouette, blackened with charcoal, the shape of a cassocked priest. The little cut-out paper doll figure was pinned to the wood by a short, sharp kitchen knife driven viciously deep, and the handle, quivering with the closing of the door, gave the illusion that the hand that had delivered the blow must have only at that instant been withdrawn.

Crossman shivered. He knew that world-old formula of hate; he knew of its almost innocent use in many a white caban, but its older, deeper meaning of demoniacal incantation rushed to his mind, somehow blending with the wizardry with which he surrounded his thoughts of the strange woman.

A step outside crunching in the snow. The door opened, revealing Antoine Marceau. The huge form of the log-brander towered above him. He could not read the expression of the eyes behind the square-cupped snow spectacles.

"She tell me, Aurore," he rumbled, "that I am to come. We have the company."

"Yes, the Curé of Portage Dernier." Crossman watched him narrowly.

Antoine took off the protecting wooden blinders and thrust them in his pocket.

Crossman stood aside, hesitating. Antoine drew off his mittens with businesslike precision, and placed a huge, capable hand on a pot-lid, lifted it, and eyed the contents of the saucepan.

"The Curé, he like ptarmigan," he observed, "but," he added in a matter-of-fact voice, "the Curé like not Aurore—he have tell you, *hein*? Ah, well, why not? For him such as Aurore are not—*voilà*."

"The Curé says she is a devil." Crossman marvelled at his temerity, yet he hung on the answer.

"Why not? For him, as I have say, she *is* not—for *me*, for *you*, ma frien', *that* is different." Antoine turned on him eyes as impersonal as those of Fate; where Crossman had expected to see animosity there was none, only a strange brotherhood of pitying understanding.

"For who shall forbid that the dawn she shall break—*hein?*" he continued. "The Curé? Not mooch. When the Dawn she come, she come; not with his hand can he hold her back. For me, now comes perhaps the sunset; perhaps the dawn for you. But what would you? Who can put the dog-harness on the wind, or put the bit in the teeth of the waterfall to hold him up?"

"Or who with his hand can draw the Borealis from heaven?" Crossman cut in. He spoke unconsciously. He had not wished to say that, he had not wanted to speak at all, but his subconscious mind had welded the thought of her so fast to the great mystery of the Northern Lights that without volition he had voiced it.

Antoine Marceau nodded quietly. The strangely aloof acknowledgment of Crossman's possible relation to this woman, *his* woman, who yet was not his or any man's, somehow shocked Crossman. His blood flamed at the thought, and yet he felt her intangible, unreal. He had but to look into her shifting, glittering eyes, and there were silence and playing lights. Suddenly his vision of her changed, became human and vital. He saw before him the sinuous movement of her strong young body. He realized the living perfume of her, clean and fresh, faintly aromatic as of pine in the sunlight, and violets in the shadow.

Antoine Marceau busied himself about the cook-house. He did not speak of Aurore again, not even when his eye rested on the paper doll skewered to the door by the deep-driven knife. He frowned, made the sign of the cross, jerked out the knife, and thrust its point in the purifying blaze of the charcoal fire. But he made no comment.

Crossman turned on his heel and entered the office-building. Through the south window he saw Jakapa snowshoeing swiftly up the short incline to the door; beside him walked the Curé, pleading and anxious. He could follow the words

as his lips framed them. In the present mood Crossman did not wish to hear the Curé's denunciation. It was sufficient to see that the Foreman had, evidently, no intention of acting on the advice proffered.

As he softly closed the door between the main office and the living room at the rear, he heard the men enter on a quick word of reproof in the Curé's rich bass.

"She does her work sufficiently well, and I shall not order her from the camp," Jakapa snapped in reply. "She is with Marceau; if he keeps her in hand, what do I care? She leave him, that *his* affair, *mon Dieu, mon père.*"

"She has bewitched you, too, Jakapa. She has bewitched that other, the young man who is here for the healing of his soul. What an irony, to heal his soul, and she comes to poison it!"

"Heal his soul?" Jakapa laughed harshly. "He's had the weak lung, shell-shock, and he's a friend of the owner. *Mon père*, if he is here for the good of his soul, that is *your* province—but me?—I am here to boss one job, and I boss him, that's all. I hope only you have not driven the cook away, or the *pot-au-feu*, she will be thin." He tried to speak the latter part of his sentence lightly, but his voice betrayed his irritation.

Crossman opened the door and entered. "Antoine will be here in a minute," he announced. "Aurore sent him back to feed the animals." He took down the enamelled tin dishes and cups and set their places. Jakapa eyed him covertly, with a half-sneering venom he had never before shown.

It was a silent meal. The Curé sighed and shook his head at intervals, and the Boss grumbled a few comments in answer to an occasional question concerning his lumberjacks. Crossman sat in a dream. Could he have understood aright when Antoine had spoken of the dawn?

Jakapa dropped a plate with a curse and a clatter. The sudden sound ripped the sick man's nerves like an exploding bomb. White to the lips, he jumped from his chair to meet the Boss's sneering eyes. The Curé laid a gentle hand on his arm, and he settled back shamefacedly.

"Your pardon, *mon père*—my nerves are on edge—excuse me—an inheritance of the trenches."

"Emotion is bad for you, my son, and you should not emotion yourself," said the Priest gently.

"Do you travel far when you leave us now?" Crossman asked self-consciously, anxious to change the subject.

"To the camp at the Chaumière Noire, a matter of ten kilometres. It is no hardship, my rounds, not at all, with the ground like a white tablecloth, and this good sun, to me, like to my dogs, it is but play." He rose from the table, glad of the excuse to hasten his going, and with scant courtesy Jakapa sped his guest's departure.

As the sled disappeared among the trees, bearing the queerly bundled figure of the Priest, the Boss unhooked his snowshoes from the wall. He seemed to have forgotten Crossman's presence, but as he turned, his smouldering eyes lighted on him. He straightened with a jerk. "What did he mean when he say, *she* have bewitch *you*?" As always, when excited, his somewhat precise English slipped back into the idiom of the habitant. "By Gar! Boss or no Boss, I pack you out if I catch you. We make no jealousies for any one, not where I am. You come here for your health—*hein*? Well, better you keep this place healthy for you."

As if further to complicate the situation, the door opened to admit the woman herself. She closed it, leaned against the wall, looking from one to the other with mocking eyes.

"Well, do I leave? Am I to pack? Have you wash the hand of me to please the Curé, yes?"

Jakapa turned on her brutally. "Get to the cook-house! Wash your dish! Did I give orders to Antoine to leave hees work? By Gar! I feel like I take you and break you in two!" He moved his knotted hands with a gesture of destruction. There was something so sinister in the action that, involuntarily, Crossman cried out a startled warning. Her laugh tinkled across it.

"Bah!" she shrugged. "If you wish to kill, why do you not kill those who make the interfere? Are you a man? What is it, a cassock, that it so protect a man? But me, because I do not wear a woman's skirt, you will break me, hey? *Me!* Nevair mind, I prefer this man. He at least make no big talk." She slipped her arm through Crossman's, letting her fingers play down from his wrist to his finger-tips—and the thrill of it left him tongue-tied and helpless.

Jakapa cursed and crouched low. He seemed about to hurl himself upon the pair before him. Again she laughed, and her tingling, searching fingers stole slowly over his throbbing pulses.

She released Crossman's arm with a jerk, and snapped the fingers that had just caressed him in the face of the furious lumberman. "*Allons !* Must I forever have no better revenge but to knife one paper doll? Am I to be hounded like a beast, and threatened wherever I go? I am tired of this dead camp. I think I go me down the river." She paused a moment in her vehemence. Her next words came almost in a whisper: "*Unless you can cross the trail to Chaumière Noire—then, maybe, I stay with you—I say—maybe.*" With a single swooping movement of her strong young arm she swept the door open, and came face to face with Antoine Marceau. "What, thou?" she said airily.

He nodded. "Shall I go back, or do you want that I go to the other side?" he asked the Foreman.

"Go to the devil!" growled Jakapa, and slinging his snowshoes over his arm, he stamped out.

"*Tiens !*" said Antoine. "He is mad, the Boss."

"I think we are all mad," said Crossman.

"Maybe," said Antoine. Quietly he gathered together his axe, mittens, and cap, and shrugging his huge shoulders into his mackinaw, looked out at the glorious brightness of the stainless world and frowned. "Come, Aurore," he said quietly.

A little later, as Crossman rose to replenish the dwindling fire, he saw him, followed by Aurore, enter the northern end of the timber limit. Were they leaving, Crossman wondered. Had the silent woodsman asserted his power over the woman? Crossman took down the field-glasses from the nail on the wall. They were the sole reminder, here in the North Country, of his years of war service. He followed the two figures until the thickening timber hid them. Idly he swept the horizon of black-green trees, blue shadows, and sparkling snow. A speck moved—a mackinaw-clad figure passed swiftly across the clearing above the Little Bijou—only a glimpse—the man took to cover in the burned timber, where the head-high brush made a tangle of brown above which the gaunt, white, black-smeared arms of dead trees flung

agonized branches to the sky.—“The short-cut trail to Chaumière Noire”—“Shall I forever have no better revenge but to stab one paper doll?” Her words echoed in his ears.

Jakapa was on the short cut to the Chaumière Noire! Only Crossman's accidental use of the field-glasses had betrayed his going. For an instant Crossman's impulse was to rush out and ring the alarm on the shrieking steel gong, but the next instant he laughed at himself. Yes, surely, he was a sick man of many imaginings. The gang boss was gone about his business. The log-brander had called upon his woman to accompany him. That was all. Her angry words were mere threats—best forgotten.

With nervous haste he bundled into his heavy garments and ran from himself and his imaginings into the dazzling embrace of the sun.

He tramped to the gang at work above the Little Bijou Chute, where they raced the logs to the iron-hard ice of the river's surface far below. He even took a hand with the axe, was laughed at, and watched the precision and power of the Jacks as they clove, swung, and lopped. From the cliff he looked down at the long bunk-house, saw the blue smoke rising straight, curled at the top like the uncoiling frond of a new fern-leaf. Saw the Chinese cook, in his wadded coat of blue, disappear into the snow-covered mound that hid the provision shack, and watched the bounding pups refusing to be broken into harness by Siwash George. It was all very simple, very real, and the twists of his tired mind relaxed; his nervous hands came to rest in the warm depths of his mackinaw pockets. The peace of sunned spaces and flowing, clean air soothed his mind and heart.

The blue shadows lengthened. The gang knocked off work. The last log was rushed down the satin ice of the chute to leap over its fellows at the foot. The smell of bacon sifted through the odours of evergreen branches and new-cut wood. Crossman declined a cordial invitation to join the gang at chuck. He must be getting back, he explained, “for chow at the Boss's.”

Whistling, he entered the office, stirred up the fire, and crossed to the cook-house. It was empty. The charcoal fire was out. Shivering, he rebuilt it, looked through the larder, and hacked off a ragged slice of jerked venison. A

film of fear rose in his soul. What if they were *really* gone? What if Antoine *had* taken her? It looked like it. His heart sank. Not to see her again! Not to feel her strange, thrilling presence! Not to sense that indomitable, insolent soul, throwing its challenge before it as it walked through the world!

Crossman came out, returned to the office, busied himself in tidying the living room and solving the disorder of his desk. The twilight sifted over wood and hill, crept from under the forest arches, and spread across the snow of the open. He lit the lamps and waited. The silence was complete. It seemed as if the night had come and closed the world, locking it away out of the reach even of God.

The meal Crossman had bunglingly prepared lay untouched on the table. Now and then the crash of an avalanche of snow from the overburdened branches emphasized the stillness. Dreading he knew not what, Crossman waited—and loneliness is not good for a sick soul.

Thoughts began crowding, nudging one another; happenings that he had dismissed as casual took on new and sinister meanings. "Two and two together" became at once a huge sum, leaping to terrifying conclusions. Then with the silence and the tense nerve-draw of waiting came the sense of things finished—done forever. A vast, all-embracing finality—"Néant"—the habitant expression for the uttermost nothing, the word seemed to push at his lips. He wanted to say it, but a premonition warned him that to utter it was to make it real.

Should he call upon the name of the Void, the Void would answer. He feared it—it meant that She would be swallowed also in the great gaping hollow of nothingness. He strained his ears for sounds of the living world—the spit of the fire, the fall of clinkers in the grate, the whisper of the wind stirring at the door. He tried to analyse his growing uneasiness. He was sure now that she had followed Antoine's bidding—forgetting him, if, indeed, her desires had ever reached toward him.

Now she seemed the only thing that mattered. He must find her; he must follow. Wherever she was, there only was the world of reality. Where she was, was life. And to find her, he must find Antoine—and then, without warning, the

door gaped—and Antoine stood before him, like a coloured figure pasted on the black ground of the night. Then he entered, quiet and matter-of-fact. He nodded, closed the door against the biting cold, pulled off his cap, and stood respectfully.

"It is no use to wait for the Boss; he will not come," said the log-brander. "I came to tell Monsieur, before I go on, that le Curé is safe at Chaumière Noire. Yes, he is safe, and Monsieur Jakapa have turn back, when I catch up with him, and tell him——"

"What?" gasped Crossman.

"It was to do," the giant twisted his cap slowly, "but it was harder than I think. It was not for jealousy, I beg you to know. That she would go if she want—to who she want, she can. I have no right to stop her. But she would have had the Curé knifed to death. She made the wish, and she put her wish in the heart of a man. If it had not been this time—then surely some other time. She always find a hand to do her will—even this of mine—once. I heard her tell to Jakapa. Therefore, Jakapa he has gone back to watch with her body. I told him where. Me I go. There are for me no more dawns. You love her, too, Monsieur, therefore, I come to tell you the end. *Bon soir, Monsieur.*"

He was gone. Again there was silence. Crossman sat rigid. What had happened? His mind refused to understand. Then he visioned her, lying on the white snow, scarlet under her breast, redder than her mackinaw, redder than her woollen mittens, redder than the cardinal-flower of her mouth—cardinal no more! "No, no!" he shrieked, springing to his feet. His words echoed in the empty room. "No—no!—He couldn't kill her!" He clung to the table. "No—no! No!" he screamed. Then he saw her eyes; she was looking in through the window—yes, they were her eyes—changing and glowing, eyes of mystery, of magic, eyes that made the silence, eyes that called and shifted and glowed. He laughed. Fools, fools! to think her dead! He staggered to the door and threw it wide. Hatless, coatless, he plunged headlong into the dark—the Dark? No! for she was there—on high, wide-flung, the banners of the Aurora Borealis blazed and swung, banners that rippled and ran, banners of rainbows, the souls of amethysts and emeralds, they fluttered

in the heavens, they swayed across the world, streamed like amber wine poured from an unseen chalice, dropped fold on fold, like the fluttering raiment of the gods.

In the north a great sapphire curtain trembled as if about to part and reveal the unknown Beyond; it grew brighter, dazzling, radiant.

“Aurore!” he called. “Aurore!” The grip of ice clutched his heart. Cold seized on him with unseen numbing hands. He was struggling, struggling with his body of lead—for one step—just a step nearer the great curtain, that now glowed warm—red—red as the ghost of her cardinal-flower lips—pillars of light, as of the halls of heaven. “Aurore!—Aurore!”

MR. DOWNEY SITS DOWN

By L. H. ROBBINS

From *Everybody's*

JACOB DOWNEY waited in line at the meat shop. A footsore little man was he. All day long, six days a week for twenty-two years, he had stood on his feet, trotted on them, climbed on them, in the hardware department of Wilbram, Prescott & Co., and still they would not toughen; still they would hurt; still to sustain his spirit after three o'clock he had to invoke a vision of slippers, a warm radiator, the *Evening Bee*, and the sympathy of Mrs. Downey and the youngsters. To the picture this evening he had added pork chops.

The woman next in line ahead of him named her meat. Said the butcher, with a side glance at the clock, "A crown roast takes quite a while, lady. Could I send it in the morning?"

No, the lady wished to see it prepared. Expressly for that purpose had she come out in the rain. To-morrow she gave a luncheon.

"First come first served," thought Jacob Downey, and bode his time in patience, feeling less pity for his aching feet than for Butcher Myers. Where was the charity in asking a hurried man at five minutes to six o'clock to frill up a roast that would not see the inside of the oven before noon next day?

Now, crown roasts are one thing to him who waits on fallen arches, and telephone calls are another. Scarcely had Downey's opening come to speak for pork chops cut medium when off went the bell and off rushed Butcher Myers.

Sharply he warned the unknown that this was Myers's Meat Shop. Blandly he smiled into the transmitter upon learning that his caller was Mrs. A. Lincoln Wilbram.

By the audience in front of the counter the following social intelligence was presently inferred:

That Mr. and Mrs. Wilbram had just returned from Florida; that they had enjoyed themselves ever so much; that they hoped Mr. Myers's little girl was better; that they were taking their meals at the Clarendon pending the mobilization of their house-servants; that they expected to dine with the Mortimer Trevelyans this evening; that food for the dog may with propriety be brought home from a hotel, but not from the Mortimer Trevelyans; that there was utterly nothing in the icebox for poor Mudge's supper; that Mudge was a chow dog purchased by a friend of Mr. Wilbram's in Hongkong at so much a pound, just as Mr. Myers purchased live fowls; that Mudge now existed not to become chow, but to consume chow, and would feel grateful in his dog heart if Mr. Myers would, at this admittedly late hour, send him two pounds of bologna and a good bone; and that Mrs. Wilbram would consider herself under deep and lasting obligation to Mr. Myers for this act of kindness.

Mr. Myers assured Mrs. Wilbram that it would mean no trouble at all; he would send up the order as soon as his boy came back from delivering a beefsteak to the Mortimer Trevelyans.

He filled out a slip and stuck it on the hook.

"Now, Mr. Downey," he said briskly.

But Jacob Downey gave him one tremendous look and limped out of the shop.

II

IT WAS evening in the home of Miss Angelina Lance. Twenty-seven hours had passed since Jacob Downey's exasperated exit from Myers's Meat Shop. The eyes of Miss Angelina were bright behind her not-unbecoming spectacles as she watched the face of the solemn young man in the Morris chair near the reading lamp.

In his hand the solemn young man held three sheets of school composition paper. As he read the pencil writing on page one he lost his gravity. Over page two he smiled broadly. At the end of the last page he said:

"D. K. T. couldn't have done better. May I show it to him?"

In the office of the Ashland (N. J.) *Bee* the solemn young man was known as Mr. Sloan. At Miss Lance's he was Sam. The mentioned D. K. T. conducted the celebrated "Bee-Stings" column on the editorial page of Mr. Sloan's journal, his levity being offset by the sobriety of Mr. Sloan, who was assistant city-editor.

On two evenings a week Mr. Sloan fled the cares of the Fourth Estate and became Sam in the soul-refreshing presence of Miss Angelina. He was by no means her only male admirer. In the Sixth Grade at the Hildale Public School she had thirty others; among these Willie Downey, whose name appeared on every page of the composition Mr. Sloan had read.

With a host of other sixth-graders throughout the city Willie had striven that day for a prize of ten dollars in gold offered by the public-spirited A. Lincoln Wilbram, of Wilbram, Prescott & Co., for the best schoolboy essay on Moral Principles.

"Moral principles, gentlemen; that is what we need in Ashland. How many men do you know who stand up for their convictions—or have any to stand up for?"

If the head of a department store is a bit thunderous at times, think what a Jovian position he occupies. In his cloud-girt, mahogany-panelled throne-room on the eighth floor he rules over a thousand mortals, down to the little Jacob Downeys in the basement, who, if they do not quite weep with delight when he gives them a smile, tremble, at least, at his frown. When a large body of popular opinion accords him greatness, were he not undemocratic to affect humility and speak small?

"I speak of common men," said Mr. Wilbram (this was at a Chamber of Commerce banquet); "of men whose living depends upon the pleasure of their superiors. How few there are with fearless eye!"

He scarcely heard the laughter from a group of building contractors at a side table, who had not seen a servile eye among their workmen in many moons; for a worthy project had popped into his mind at that instant. How was the moral backbone of our yeomanry to be stiffened save through

education? Why not a prize contest to stimulate the interest of the rising generation in this obsolete subject?

In many an Ashland home where bicycles, roller-skates, wireless outfits, and other such extravagances were strongly desired, the question had since been asked: "Pa, what are Moral Principles?" While some of the resulting essays indicated a haziness in paternal minds, not so the production that Mr. Sloan read in Miss Lance's parlour.

"But I couldn't let you print it," said Miss Angelina. "I wouldn't have Willie shamed for anything. He may be weak in grammar, but he is captain of every athletic team in the school. He has told me in confidence that he means to spend the prize money for a genuine horse-hide catching-mitt."

"If I cross out his name, or give him a *nom de plume*?"

On that condition Miss Lance consented.

III

AT THE office next morning Sloan found the essay in his pocket and looked around the city-room for D. K. T. The staff poet-clown was no daylight saver; professing to burn the midnight oil in the interest of his employer, he seldom drifted in before half-past nine.

"See me. S. S." wrote Sloan, and dropped Willie's manuscript on D. K. T.'s desk.

Then he jumped and gasped, and copy-readers and office-boys jumped and gasped, and the religious editor dashed frantically for the stairs, outrunning the entire staff down the hall, though he had farther to go than any other man or woman there. A huge, heart-stopping shock had rocked the building, set the windows to clattering and the lights to swinging, and brought down in a cloud the accumulated dust of a quarter-century.

Within two minutes by the clock Sloan and five reporters had started for the scene of the Rutland disaster, fifteen miles away, where enough giant powder had gone up in one terrific blast to raze Gibraltar. A thriving town lay in ruins; hundreds of families were homeless; a steamship was sunk at her dock; a passenger train blown from the rails.

At eleven o'clock on the night following that pitiful day

Sloan journeyed homeward to Ashland in an inter-urban trolley-car in company with a crowd of refugees. A copy of the last edition of the *Bee* comforted his weary soul.

The first page was a triumph. Count on the office to back up its men in the field! There was the whole story, the whole horror and heartbreak, finely displayed. There were his photographs of the wreckage; there, in a "box" was his interview with the superintendent of the Rutland Company; there was a map of the devastated area. Perhaps someone had found time even to do an editorial; in that case the clean-up would be complete.

Opening the paper to the sixth page, he groaned; for the first thing that caught his eye was Willie Downey's essay, at the top of D. K. T.'s column, with Willie's name below the headline.

MOREL PRINSAPLES

By WILLIE DOWNEY

AGE 12

Morel Prinsaples is when you have a nerve to stick up for some thing.

Like last night my Father went in Mires meet shop & stood in line 15 or twenty min. wateing his tirn & when his tirn come he says to mr. Mires Ile have 6 porc chops.

at that inst. the telapphone wrang & mr. Mires slidd for it like it was 2nd base.

Hold on Mires says Pa, who got here 1st, me or that bell wringer.

Igscuse me just 1 min. says Mr. mires.

No I be ding if Ile igscuse you says Pa, 1st come 1st served is the rool of bizness all over."

But Mr. mires wyped his hands on his apern & ansered the wring & it was mrs. Will Brum, she was going to eat out at a frends so she wanted 2 lbs, bolony & a dog bone.

So then Pa give him hale columbus.

"Here I bin wateing $\frac{1}{2}$ an our he said, yet when some lazy lofer of a woman who has been reading a novvle or a sleep all after noon pphones you to rush her up some dog meet in youre Autto with gass 36 cts. & charge it to her acct. & may be you wont get youre munny for three 4 munths, wy you run to wate on her while I stand & shovle my feet in youre saw dust like a ding mexican pea own or some thing.

What says Pa is there about a cusstamer who takes the trubble to come for his meet & pay cash for it & delivvers it him self that maiks him so Meen & Lo that he hass to be pushed one side for some body that has not got Gumpshun enoughf to order her dog bones before the rush our?

Do you think that people with a telapphone's munny is any better

than mine, do you think becuae I walk in here on my hine leggs that I am a piker & a cheep skait, because if so I will bring along my telapphone contract nex time & show you & then may be you will reckonnize me as a free born amerrican who dont haff to traid where I haff to play 2d fiddle to a chow pupp. Its agenst my morel prinsaples says Pa."

With theas wirds he walks out in the rane althogh his feet hurt him clear down to washington St. to the nex meet store, but by that time they were all cloased up so we had prinsaples for supper insted of porc chops.

Pa says if he run a store & had a pphone & no body to anser it & do nothing else he would ring it's neck, becuae while the telephone is the gratest blessing of the aige, but a pphone with out an opperater is like a ham ommalet with the ham let out. He says the reazon the Chane Stores have such a pull with the public is becuae the man behine the counter is not all the time Jilting you in the middle of your order & chacing off to be sweet to some sosciety dame with a dog 4 miles away.

Ma says she dont kno why we have a pphone any how becuae every time she is youseing it a woman buts in & jiggles the hook & says will you pleas hang up so I can call a Dr. & when Ma hangs up & then lissens in to see who is sick, wy this woman calls up a lady frend & they nock Ma back & 4th over the wyre for ours & some times they say I bet she is listening in on us dont you.

So as I say let us all stick up for our Morel Prinsaples like my Father come what may.

IV

BRIGHT were Miss Angelina's eyes but not with mirth. It was unspeakable, this thing that Mr. Sloan had done. Thrice before bedtime she called his lodgings. Mr. Sloan was not in.

Before the last call, she donned her wraps and went out to Plume Street. Courageously she pulled the bell at Number Nine. Willie's mother opened the door and cried, surprised, "Why! Miss Lance."

"Is Willie here? Have you seen the paper? Will you let me tell him how it happened, and how sorry I am?"

Willie was not receiving callers this evening. He had been sent to bed without supper. The explosion at Rutland had been as nothing, it seemed, to the outburst in the Downey home.

Slowly the extent of the harm dawned upon Miss Angelina.

"It was Mrs. A. Lincoln Wilbram wanted the dog bone," said Mrs. Downey tearfully. "Everybody will recognize her; and what Mr. Wilbram will do to us we don't need to be told. Poor Jake is so upset he has gone out to roam in the dark. He couldn't stay in the house."

New jobs were scarce for men at his time of life, and with his feet. Dora and Jennie might have to leave high school.

"I'm sure you meant us no wrong, Miss Lance; I'm sure there was a mistake. But think how dreadful it is, after twenty-two years of having Mr. Wilbram's pay, then to turn around and backbite his wife like that, right out in print!"

Doubly troubled now, Miss Lance departed. Attracted by a quick gathering of loiterers in the avenue, she witnessed a controversy that might easily have become a police matter.

"You're a liar if you say you said all that to me!" shouted the burly Butcher Myers. "You never opened your head, you shrimp! Bawling me out in the papers and losing me my best customers! Whaddye mean?"

Back came the retort from Jacob Downey with the snarl of a little creature at bay.

"If I didn't say it to you then, you big lobster, I say it to you now. All that the paper says I said I say. What'll you do about it?"

"Hah! You!" Myers snapped his fingers in Downey's fiery face and turned away.

Miss Lance's path to the Hilldale School next morning took her past three post-boxes. Into the third she dropped a note that she had carried from home. Mr. Sloan would find her message exceedingly brief, although (or, perhaps, because) she had spent hours in composing it.

DEAR SIR:

I regret to discover that you lack moral principles.

ANGELINA LANCE.

Just before the last bell the janitor brought in a prisoner for her custody. Willie Downey's head was bloody but unbowed; three seventh-graders he had vanquished in one round. "They guyed me," said he. "They called me a Nawthour."

Morning prayer and song waited while teacher and pupil spoke earnestly of many things; while the teacher's eyes filled with tears, and the pupil's heart filled with high resolve to bring home the baseball championship of the Ashland Public

School League and lay it at Miss Angelina's feet, or perish in the attempt.

V

THE A. Lincoln Wilbram prize went to a small boy named Aaron Levinsky whose English was 99 per cent. pure. Little Aaron's essay was printed as the centre-piece in Wilbram, Prescott & Co.'s page in the *Bee*; little Aaron invested his gold in thrift-stamps, and the tumult and the shouting died.

Miss Angelina Lance sat alone every evening of the week. True, Mr. Sloan had tried to right the wrong; he had called Miss Angelina on the telephone, which he should have known was an inadequate thing to do; he had also sent a ten-dollar bank-note to Willie, in care of Miss Lance at the Hilldale School, together with his warm felicitations upon Willie's success as a *littérateur*. Did Willie know that his fine first effort had been reprinted, with proper credit, in the great New York *Planet*?

True, too, the illustrious D. K. T. had written Miss Angelina an abject apology, most witty and poetic, taking all the blame to himself and more than exonerating his high-principled friend Mr. Sloan.

But the bank-note went back to its donor without even a rejection slip; and D. K. T.'s humour was fatal to his client's cause. Ghastly are they who jest in the shadow of tragedy. Mr. Sloan and D. K. T. did not know, of course—Miss Angelina had not thought it of any use to tell them—of the sword which they had hung up by a thread above the heads of the Downeys.

As for Jacob Downey, he limped about amid his hardware in the basement at Wilbram, Prescott & Co.s, careworn, haunted of eye, expecting the house to crash about his ears at any moment. One does not with impunity publish the wife of one's employer as a lazy loafer.

The A. Lincoln Wilbrams had servants again, and dined at home. To Mr. Wilbram said Mrs. Wilbram one evening: "It is the strangest thing. In the last month I've met scarcely a soul who hasn't asked me silly questions about Mudge and his diet. Mrs. Trevelyan and everybody. And they always look so queer."

Mr. Wilbram was reminded that while coming home that

evening with a package in his hand he had met Trevelyan, and Trevelyan had inquired: "What's that? A bone for the dog?"

"To-morrow," said A. Lincoln, "I'll ask him what he was driving at."

"What was the package?" queried his wife.

He fetched it from the hall. It had come to him at the store that day by registered mail.

"From Hildegarde," said Mrs. Wilbram, noting the Los Angeles postmark. Hildegarde was honeymooning among the orange groves. Wrote the happy bride:

DEAR AUNT AND UNCLE:

Charles and I see by the paper that Mudge is hungry, so we are sending him a little present.

"What can the child mean, Abe?"

"Don't ask me," he answered. "Undo the present and see."

They loosened blue ribbons and wrappings of soft paper, and disclosed a link of bologna sausage.

Maddening? It might have been, if Hildegarde had not thought to inclose a page from the *Daily Southern Californian*, upon which, ringed with pencil marks, was a bit of miscellany headed, "Morel Prinsaples."

They read it through to the conclusion:

So as I say let us all stick up for our Morel Prinsaples like my Father come what may.—Willie Downey in Ashland (N. J.) *Bee*.

"Why!—why!—it's—it's me!" cried Mrs. Wilbram. "I did telephone to Mr. Myers for two pounds of bologna and a dog bone—on the night we dined at the Trevelyans'!"

"It comes mighty close to libel," fumed Wilbram.

"How do they dare! You must see Worthington Oakes about this, Abe."

"I certainly will," he vowed.

VI

HE CERTAINLY did, as Mr. Worthington Oakes, the publisher of the *Bee*, will testify. In the front office on the editorial floor he saw Mr. Oakes for a bad half-hour, and demanded a public retraction of the insult.

At about the same time a dapper stranger who had come up in the elevator with Mr. Wilbram held speech with Assistant City-Editor Sloan in the local room at the other end of the hall.

"Yonder's your bird," said Mr. Sloan, pointing to a poetic-looking young man at a desk in a corner.

Crossing to the poet, who was absorbed in his day's poesy and talking to himself as he versified, the stranger smiled and spoke.

"Am I addressing the celebrated D. K. T.?"

"Am, cam, dam, damn, ham, jam, lamb——"

The far-away look of genius faded out of the poet's eyes.

"Not buying," said he. "My pay-envelope is mortgaged to you book-agents for ten years to come. Ma'am, ram, Sam, cram, clam, gram, slam——"

"Books are not my line," said the dapper one briskly. "I represent the Jones-Nonpareil Newspaper Syndicate. In fact, I am Jones. I have a proposition to make to you, Mr. D. K. T., that may enable you to buy more books than you can ever read. You know, of course, what the Jones-Nonpareil service is. We reach the leading dailies of the United States and Canada——"

"Have a chair, Mr. Jones."

"Thank you. We handle some very successful writers. Malcomb Hardy, you may have heard, takes his little five hundred a week out of us; and poor Larry Bonner pulled down eleven hundred as long as he had health. His Chinese-laundryman sketches might be selling yet."

"Suspense is cruel," spoke D. K. T. eagerly. "Let the glad news come."

"Some time ago," said the syndicate man, "you printed in your column an essay in imitation of a schoolboy's. You called it 'Moral Principles'."

D. K. T. sank back with a low moan.

"If you can write six of those a week for a year," continued the visitor, "you won't ever need to slave any more. You can burn your pen and devote the rest of your life to golf and good works."

The poet closed his eyes. "Sham, swam, diagram," he murmured.

"Does a minimum guarantee of fifteen thousand a year

look like anything to you? There will, of course, be the book rights and the movie rights in addition."

"Anagram, epigram, telegram, flimflam—aha!" cried D. K. T. "Siam!" He wrote it down.

"That little skit of yours," pursued the caller, "has swept the country. You have created a nation-wide demand. My finger is on the journalistic pulse, and I know. Can you repeat?"

He drew a paper from his pocketbook.

"Here is a list of subjects your imaginary Willie Downey might start with: The Monetary System; the Cost of Living; the League of Nations; Capital and Labour——"

Over the stranger's head an office-boy whispered significantly: "Front office."

"Excuse me," said the poet, and hurried away.

With the publisher, in the front office, sat A. Lincoln Wilbram, quite purple in the cheeks. They had a file of the *Bee* before them.

"Diedrick," said Mr. Oakes, "on March eighteenth you printed this thing"—his finger on Willie's essay—"why did you do it?"

"What's the matter with it?" replied D. K. T.

"The matter with it," spoke Mr. Wilbram terribly, "is that it slanders my wife. It makes her out to eat dog bones. Friends of ours as far away as California have seen it and recognized her portrait, drawn by your scurrilous pen. The worst of it is, the slander is founded on fact. By what right do you air my domestic affairs before the public in this outrageous fashion?"

With agonized eyes the funny-man read the essay as far as the fateful line, "It was Mrs. Will Brum."

"My gosh!" he cried.

"How did you come to write such a thing?" Mr. Oakes demanded.

"Me write that thing? If I only had!"

The facts were recalled; the sending of Mr. Sloan and many reporters to Rutland; the need of extra hands at the copy-table that day.

"I found this contribution on my desk. It looked safe. In the rush of the morning I sent it up and never gave it another thought."

"So it is really a boy's essay, and not some of your own fooling?" asked Oakes.

"A boy's essay, yes; entered in Mr. Wilbram's prize contest, eliminated by the boy's teacher and shown by her to Mr. Sloan, who brought it to the shop. I know now that Sloan meant me to change the author's name to save the kid from ridicule. If there were actual persons in it, I'm as amazed as Mrs. Wilbram."

"I wonder, Oakes," said Wilbram, "that a dignified newspaper like yours would print such trash, in the first place."

Worthington Oakes looked down his nose. D. K. T. took up the challenge.

"Trash, sir? If it's trash, why has the Ashland Telephone asked permission to reprint it on the front cover of their next directory?"

"Have they asked that?"

"They have; they say they will put a little moral principle into the telephone hogs in this town. And didn't a Fifth Avenue minister preach a sermon on it last Sunday? Doesn't the *Literary Review* give it half a page this week? Hasn't it been scissored by almost every exchange editor in the land? Isn't there a man in the city-room now offering me fifteen thousand a year to write a daily screed like it?"

"You can see, Wilbram," said Mr. Oakes, "that there was no intention to injure or annoy. We are very sorry; but how can we print an apology to Mrs. Wilbram without making the matter worse?"

"Who is this Willie Downey?" demanded Wilbram. "And who is the school teacher?"

"I don't believe my moral principles will let me tell you," replied D. K. T. "I'm positive Mr. Sloan's won't let him. We received the essay in confidence."

"Enough said," Mr. Wilbram exclaimed, rising. "Good day to you. I don't need your help, anyway. I'll find out from the butcher."

VII

IT SEEMED necessary that Mr. Sloan should call at the Lance home that evening. Whatever Miss Angelina might think of him, it was his duty to take counsel with her for the welfare of Willie.

He began with the least important of the grave matters upon his mind.

"Do you suppose your *protégé* could write some essays like the one we printed?"

"Why, Mr. Sloan?"

If Miss Angelina had responded, "Why, you hyena?" she would not have cut him more deeply than with her simple, "Why, Mr. Sloan?"

"A newspaper syndicate," he explained, "has offered D. K. T. a fortune for a series of them."

"Poor Willie!" she sighed. "He flunked his English exam. to-day. I'm afraid I shall have him another year."

"He is a lucky boy," said Sloan.

"Do you think so?"

Clearly her meaning was, "Do you think he is lucky when a powerful newspaper goes out of its way to crush him?"

"There is no use approaching him with a literary contract?"

"Not with the baseball season just opening. His team beat the Watersides yesterday, sixteen—nothing. He has more important business on hand than writing for newspapers."

Since Sloan wrote for a newspaper, this was rather a dig. Nevertheless, he persevered.

"A. Lincoln Wilbram is on his trail. Do you know that Willie libelled Mrs. Wilbram?"

"Oh! Sam. Surely I know about the libel. But is—is Mr. Wilbram really—— Has he discovered?"

"He came to the office to-day. We gave him no information; but he has other sources. He is bound to identify his enemy before he quits."

"I didn't know about the so-called slander at first," said she, "when I—when you——"

"When I promised to change Willie's name?"

"I found out when I went to them, on the night it came out in the paper. They were woefully frightened. They are frightened still. Mr. Downey has worked for Mr. Wilbram since he was a boy. They think of Mr. Wilbram almost as a god. It's—it's a tragedy, Sam, to them."

"Would it do any good to warn them?"

"They need no warning," said Miss Angelina. "Don't add to their terrors."

"I am more sorry than I can say. May I hope to be forgiven some day?"

"There's nothing to forgive, Sam. It was an accident. But don't you see what a dangerous weapon a newspaper is?"

"Worse than a car or a gun," he agreed.

As he strolled homeward along a stately avenue, wondering what he could do to avert the retribution that moved toward the Downeys, and finding that his assistant city-editor's resourcefulness availed him naught, he heard the scamper of feet behind him and whirled about with cane upraised in time to bring a snarling chow dog to a stand.

"Beat it, you brute!" he growled.

"Yeowp!" responded the chow dog, and leaped in air.

"Don't be alarmed," spoke a voice out of the gloom of the nearest lawn. "When he sees a man with a stick, he wants to play."

Sloan peered at the speaker's face. "Isn't this Mr. Wilbram? You were at the *Bee* office to-day, sir. May I have a word with you about the Willie Downey matter?"

"Come in," said Mr. Wilbram.

VIII

ON THE first pay-day in May the impending sword cut its thread. Said a messenger to Jacob Downey: "They want you on the eighth floor." Downey set his jaws and followed.

In the mahogany-panelled room A. Lincoln Wilbram turned from the window and transfixed his servitor with eyes that bored like steel bits.

"Downey, I understand you have a literary son."

Jacob held his breath, eyed his accuser steadily, and assured himself that it would soon be over now.

"How about it, Downey?"

"I know what you mean, sir."

"Did you say the things printed there?"

The little man wasted no time in examining the newspaper clipping.

"Yes, sir, I did. If it has come to your lady's ears what I called her, I beg her pardon. But what I said I'll stick to. If I stand fifteen minutes in line in a meat store or any other

kind of store, I've got a right to be waited on ahead of anybody that rings up, I don't give a ding who she is."

"Good for you, Downey. Let me see, how long have you worked for us?"

"Twenty-three years next January, sir."

"Floor salesman all the while?"

"Since 1900. Before that I was a wrapper."

"How many men have been promoted over your head?"

"Three."

"Four," Wilbram corrected. "First was Miggins."

"I don't count him, sir. Him and I started together."

"Miggins was a failure. Then Farisell; now in prison. Next, McCardy; he ran off to Simonds & Co. the minute they crooked a finger at him. Last, young Prescott, who is now to come up here with his father. Could you run the department if you had it?"

"Between you and I," replied Jacob Downey, sick, dizzy, trembling, "I been running the department these fifteen years."

"How'd you like to run it from now as manager? When I find a man with convictions and courage I advance him. The man who stands up is the man to sit down. That's evolution. If you could stand up to a big butcher like Myers and talk Dutch to him the way you did, I guess we need you at a desk. What do you say?"

A desk! A chance to rest his feet! Jacob Downey stiffened.

"Mr. Wilbram, I—I got to tell the truth. I never said those things to Myers. I just walked out."

"But you said them. You acknowledge it."

"I said 'em, yes—after I got home. To the family I said 'em. When I was in the meat shop I only thought 'em."

"So Myers has told me," said Jove, smiling. "Downey, my man, you've got more than moral courage. You've got common sense to go with it. Tell young Prescott to give you his keys."

THE MARRIAGE IN KAIRWAN

BY WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

From *Harper's*

KAIRWAN the Holy lay asleep, pent in its thick walls. The moon had sunk at midnight, but the chill light seemed scarcely to have diminished; only the limewashed city had become a marble city, and all the towers turned fabulous in the nerve, dry, needle rain of the stars that burn over the desert of mid-Tunisia.

In the street Bab Djedid the nailed boots of the watch passed from west to east. When their thin racket had turned out and died in the dust of the market, Habib ben Habib emerged from the shadow of a door arch and, putting a foot on the tiled ledge of Bou-Kedj's fry shop, swung up by cranny and gutter till he stood on the plain of the house-tops.

Now he looked about him, for on this dim tableland he walked with his life in his hands. He looked to the west, toward the gate, to the south, to the northeast through the ghostly wood of minarets. Then, perceiving nothing that stirred, he went on moving without sound in the camel-skin slippers he had taken from his father's court.

In the uncertain light, but for those slippers and the long-tasselled *chechia* on his head, one would not have taken him for anything but a European and a stranger. And one would have been right, almost. In the city of his birth and rearing, and of the birth and rearing of his Arab fathers generations dead, Habib ben Habib bel-Kalfate looked upon himself in the rebellious, romantic light of a prisoner in exile—exile from the streets of Paris where, in his four years, he had tasted the strange delights of the Christian—exile from the university where he had dabbled with his keen, light-balanced mind in the learning of the conqueror.

Sometimes, in the month since he had come home, he had shaken himself and wondered aloud, "Where am I?" with the least little hint, perhaps, of melodrama. Sometimes in the French café outside the walls, among the officers of the garrison, a bantering perversity drove him on to chant the old glories of Islam, the poets of Andalusia, and the bombastic histories of the saints; and in the midst of it, his face pink with the Frenchmen's wine and his own bitter, half-frightened mockery, he would break off suddenly, "*Voilà, Messieurs!* you will see that I am the best of Mussulmans!" He would laugh then in a key so high and restless that the commandant, shaking his head, would murmur to the lieutenant beside him, "One day, Genet, we must be on the alert for a dagger in that quarter there, eh?"

And Genet, who knew almost as much of the character of the university Arab as the commandant himself, would nod his head.

When Habib had laughed for a moment he would grow silent. Presently he would go out into the ugly dark of the foreign quarter, followed very often by Raoul Genet. He had known Raoul most casually in Paris. Here in the Tunisian *bled*, when Raoul held out his hand to say good-night under the gate lamp at the Bab Djelladin, the troubled fellow clung to it. The smell of the African city, coming under the great brick arch, reached out and closed around him like a hand—a hand bigger than Raoul's.

"You are my brother: not they. I am not of these people, Raoul!"

But then he would go in, under the black arch and the black shade of the false-pepper trees. In the darkness he felt the trees, centuries old, and all the blank houses watching him. . . .

To-night, stealing across the sleeping roofs, he felt the starlit mosque towers watching him in secret, the pale, silent espionage of them who could wait. The hush of the desert troubled him. Youth troubled him. His lips were dry.

He had come to an arbour covered with a vine. Whose it was, on what house-holder's roof it was reared, he had never known. He entered.

"She is not here." He moistened his lips with his tongue. He sat down on the stone divan to wait, watching toward

the west through the doorway across which hung a loop of vine, like a snake.

He saw her a long way off, approaching by swift darts and intervals of immobility, when her whiteness grew a part of the whiteness of the terrace. It was so he had seen her moving on that first night when, half tipsy with wine and strangeness, he had pursued, caught her, and uncovered her face.

To-night she uncovered it herself. She put back the hooded fold of her *haik*, showing him her face, her scarlet mouth, her wide eyes, long at the outer corners, her hair aflame with henna.

The hush of a thousand empty miles lay over the city. For an hour nothing lived but the universe, the bright dust in the sky. . . .

That hush was disrupted. The single long crash of a human throat! Rolling down over the plain of the housetops!

"*La illah il Allah, Mohammed rassoul 'lah! Allah Akbar!* God is great!"

One by one the dim towers took it up. The call to prayer rolled between the stars and the town. It searched the white runways. It penetrated the vine-bowered arbour. Little by little, tower by tower, it died. In a *fondouk* outside the gate a waking camel lifted a gargling wail. A jackal dog barked in the Oued Zaroud two miles away. And again the silence of the desert came up over the city walls.

Under the vine Habib whispered: "No, I don't care anything about thy name. A name is such a little thing. I'll call thee 'Nedjma,' because we are under the stars."

"*Ai, Nedjmetek—'Thy Star'!*" The girl's lips moved drowsily. In the dark her eyes shone with a dull, steady lustre, unblinking, unquestioning, always unquestioning.

That slumberous acquiescence, taken from all her Arab mothers, began to touch his nerves with the old uneasiness. He took her shoulders between his hands and shook her roughly, crying in a whisper:

"Why dost thou do nothing but repeat my words? Talk! Say things to me! Thou art like the rest; thou wouldst try to make me seem like these Arab men, who wish for nothing in a woman but the shadow of themselves. And I am not like that!"

"No, *sidi*, no."

"But talk! Tell me things about thyself, thy life, thy world. Talk! In Paris, now, a man and a woman can talk together—yes—as if they were two friends met in a coffeehouse. And those women can talk! Ah! in Paris I have known women——"

The girl stirred now. Her eyes narrowed; the dark line of her lips thinned. At last something comprehensible had touched her mind.

"Thou hast known many women, then, *sidi*! Thou hast come here but to tell me that? Me, who am of little beauty in a man's eyes!"

Habib laughed under his breath. He shook her again. He kissed her and kissed her again on her red lips.

"Thou art jealous, then! But thou canst not comprehend. Canst thou comprehend this, that thou art more beautiful by many times than any other woman I have ever seen? Thou art a heaven of loveliness, and I cannot live without thee. That is true . . . Nedjma. I am going to take thee for my wife, because I cannot live without thine eyes, thy lips, the fragrance of thy hair. . . . Yes, I am going to marry thee, my star. It is written! It is written!"

For the first time he could not see her eyes. She had turned them away. Once again something had come in contact with the smooth, heavy substance of her mind. He pulled at her.

"Say! Say, Nedjma! . . . It is written!"

"It is not written, *sidi*." The same ungroping acquiescence was in her whisper. "I have been promised, *sidi*, to another than thee."

Habib's arms let go; her weight sank away in the dark under the vine. The silence of the dead night crept in and lay between them.

"And in the night of thy marriage, then, thy husband—or thy father, if thou hast a father—will kill thee."

"*In-cha-'llah*. If it be the will of God."

Again the silence came and lay heavy between them. A minute and another minute went away. Habib's wrists were shaking. His breast began to heave. With a sudden roughness he took her back, to devour her lips and eyes and hair with the violence of his kisses.

"No, no! I'll not have it! No! Thou art too beautiful for any other man than I even to look upon! No, no, no!"

Habib ben Habib walked out of the gate Djelladin. The day had come; the dawn made a crimson flame in the false-pepper trees. The life of the gate was already at full tide of sound and colour, braying, gargling, quarrelling—nomads wading in their flocks, Djlass countrymen, Singalese soldiers, Jewish pack-peddlers, Bedouin women bent double under their stacks of desert fire-grass streaming inward, dust white, dust yellow, and all red in the dawn under the red wall.

The flood ran against him. It tried to suck him back into the maw of the city. He fought against it with his shoulders and his knees. He tried now to run. It sucked him back. A wandering *Aissaoua* plucked at his sleeve and held under his nose a desert viper that gave off metallic rose glints in its slow, pained constrictions.

"To the glory of Sidna Aissa, master, two sous."

He kept tugging at Habib's sleeve, holding him back, sucking him back with his twisting reptile into the city of the faithful.

"In the name of Jesus, master, two copper sous!"

Habib's nerves snapped. He struck off the holy mendicant with his fist. "That the devil grill thee!" he chattered. He ran. He bumped into beasts. He bumped into a blue tunic. He halted, blinked, and passed a hand over his hot-lidded eyes. He stammered:

"My friend! I have been looking for you! *Hamdou lillah! El hamdou'llah!*"

Raoul Genet, studying the flushed, bright-eyed, unsteady youth, put up a hand to cover a little smile, half ironic, half pitying.

"So, Habib ben Habib, you revert! Camel-driver's talk in your mouth and camel's-hide slippers on your feet. Already you revert! Eh?"

"No, that is not the truth. But I am in need of a friend."

"You look like a ghost, Habib." The faint smile still twisted Raoul's lips. "Or a drunken angel. You have not slept."

"That's of no importance. I tell you I am in need——"

"You've not had coffee, Habib. When you've had coffee——"

"Coffee! My God! Raoul, that you go on talking of coffee when life and death are in the balance! For I can't live without—— Listen, now! Strictly! I have need to-night—to-morrow night—one night when it is dark—I have need of the garrison car."

The other made a blowing sound. "I'm the commandant, am I, overnight? *Zut!* The garrison car!"

Habib took hold of his arm and held it tight. "If not the car, two horses, then. And I call you my friend."

"Two horses! Ah! So! I begin to perceive. Youth! Youth!"

"Don't jibe, Raoul! I have need of two horses—two horses that are fast and strong."

"Are the horses in thy father's stable, then, of no swiftness and of no strength?"

It was said in the *patois*, the bastard Arabic of the Tunisian *bled*. A shadow had fallen across them; the voice came from above. From the height of his crimson saddle Si Habib bel-Kalfate awaited the answer of his son. His brown, unlined, black-bearded face, shadowed in the hood of his creamy burnoose, remained serene, benign, urbanely attendant. But if an Arab knows when to wait, he knows also when not to wait. And now it was as if nothing had been said before.

"Greeting, my son. I have been seeking thee. Thy couch was not slept upon last night."

Habib's face was sullen to stupidity. "Last night, sire, I slept at the *caserne*, at the invitation of my friend, Lieutenant Genet, whom you see beside me."

The Arab, turning in his saddle, appeared to notice the Christian for the first time. His lids drooped; his head inclined an inch.

"Greeting to thee, oh, master!"

"To thee, greeting!"

"Thou art in well-being?"

"There is no ill. And thou?"

"There is no ill. That the praise be to God, and the prayer!"

Bel-Kalfate cleared his throat and lifted the reins from the neck of his mare.

"Rest in well-being!" he pronounced.

Raoul shrugged his shoulders a little and murmured: "May God multiply thy days! . . . And yours, too," he added to Habib in French. He bowed and took his leave.

Bel-Kalfate watched him away through the thinning crowd, sitting his saddle stolidly, in an attitude of rumination. When the blue cap had vanished behind the blazing corner of the wool dyers, he threw the reins to his Sudanese stirrup boy and got down to the ground. He took his son's hand. So, palm in palm, at a grave pace, they walked back under the arch into the city. The market-going stream was nearly done. The tide, against which at its flood Habib had fought and won ground, carried him down again with its last shallow wash—so easily!

His nerves had gone slack. He walked in a heavy white dream. The city drew him deeper into its murmurous heart. The walls pressed closer and hid him away. The *souks* swallowed him under their shadowy arcades. The breath of the bazaar, fetor of offal, stench of raw leather, and all the creeping perfumes of Barbary, attar of roses, chypre and amber and musk, clogged his senses like the drug of some abominable seduction. He was weary, weary, weary. And in a strange, troubling way he was at rest.

"*Mektoub!* It is written! It is written in the book of the destiny of man!"

With a kind of hypnotic fascination, out of the corners of his eyes, he took stock of the face beside him, the face of the strange being that was his father—the broad, moist, unmarked brow; the large eyes, heavy-lidded, serene; the full-fleshed cheeks from which the beard sprang soft and rank, and against which a hyacinth, pendent over the ear, showed with a startling purity of pallor; and the mobile, deep-coloured, humid lips—the lips of the voluptuary, the eyes of the dreamer, the brow of the man of never-troubled faith.

"Am I like that?" And then, "What can that one be to me?"

As if in answer, bel-Kalfate's gaze came to his son.

"I love thee," he said, and he kissed Habib's temple with his lips. "Thou art my son," he went on, "and my eyes were thirsty to drink of the sight of thee. It is *el jammaa*.¹

¹Friday, the Mohammedan Sabbath

It is time we should go to the prayer. We shall go with Hadji Daoud to-day, for afterward, there at the mosque, I have rendezvous with his friends, in the matter of the dowry. It is the day, thou rememberest, that he appointed."

Habib wanted to stop. He wanted to think. He wanted time. But the serene, warm pressure of his father's hand carried him on.

Stammering words fell from his mouth.

"My mother—I remember—my mother, it is true, said something—but I did not altogether comprehend—and—— Oh! my sire——"

"Thou shalt be content. Thou art a man now. The days of thy learning are accomplished. Thou hast suffered exile; now is thy reward prepared. And the daughter of the notary, thy betrothed, is as lovely as a palm tree in the morning and as mild as sweet milk, beauteous as a pearl, Habib, a milk-white pearl. See!"

Drawing from his burnoose a sack of Moroccan lambskin, he opened it and lifted out a pearl. His fingers, even at rest, seemed to caress it. They slid back among the treasure in the sack, the bargaining price for the first wife of the only son of a man blessed by God. And now they brought forth also a red stone, cut in the fashion of Tunis.

"A milk-white sea pearl, look thou; to wed in a jewel with the blood-red ruby that is the son of my breast. Ah, Habib, my Habib, but thou shalt be content!"

They stood in the sunlight before the green door of a mosque. As the hand of the city had reached out for Habib through the city gate, so now the prayer, throbbing like a tide across the pillared mystery of the court, reached out through the doorway in the blaze. . . . And he heard his own voice, strange in his mouth, shallow as a bleat:

"Why, then, sire—why, oh! why, then, hast thou allowed me to make of those others the friends of my spirit, the companions of my mind?"

"They are neither companions nor friends of thine, for God is God!"

"And why hast thou sent me to learn the teaching of the French?"

"When thou settest thy horse against an enemy it is well to have two lances to thy hand—thine own and his.

And it is written, Habib, son of Habib, that thou shalt be content. . . . Put off thy shoes now and come. It is time we were at prayer."

Summer died. Autumn grew. With the approach of winter an obscure nervousness spread over the land. In the dust of its eight months' drought, from one day to another, from one glass-dry night to another, the desert waited for the coming of the rains. The earth cracked. A cloud sailing lone and high from the coast of Sousse passed under the moon and everywhere men stirred in their sleep, woke, looked out—from their tents on the cactus steppes, from *fondouks* on the camel tracks of the west, from marble courts of Kairwan. . . . The cloud passed on and vanished in the sky. On the plain the earth cracks crept and ramified. Gaunt beasts tugged at their heel ropes and would not be still. The jackals came closer to the tents. The city slept again, but in its sleep it seemed to mutter and twitch. . . .

In the serpent-spotted light under the vine on the housetop Habib muttered, too, and twitched a little. It was as if the arid months had got in under his skin and peeled off the coverings of his nerves. The girl's eyes widened with a gradual, phlegmatic wonder of pain under the pinch of his blue fingers on her arms. His face was the colour of the moon.

"Am I a child of three years, that my father should lead me here or lead me there by the hand? Am I that?"

"Nay, *sidi*, nay."

"Am I a sheep between two wells, that the herder's stick should tell me, 'Here, and not there, thou shalt drink'? Am I a sheep?"

"Thou art neither child nor sheep, *sidi*, but a lion!"

"Yes, a lion!" A sudden thin exaltation shook him like a fever chill. "I am more than a lion, Nedjma, I am a man—just as the *Roumi*¹ are men—men who decide—men who undertake—agitate—accomplish . . . and now, for the last time, I have decided. A fate has given thy loveliness to me, and no man shall take it away from me to enjoy. I will take it away from them instead! From all the men of this Africa, conquered by the French. Hark! I will come and

¹Romans—*i. e.*, Christians.

take thee away in the night, to the land beyond the sea, where thou mayest be always near me, and neither God nor man say yes or no!"

"And there, *sidi*, beyond the sea, I may talk unveiled with other men? As thou hast told me, in France——"

"Yes, yes, as I have told thee, there thou mayest—thou——"

He broke off, lost in thought, staring down at the dim oval of her face. Again he twitched a little. Again his fingers tightened on her arms. He twisted her around with a kind of violence of confrontation.

"But wouldst thou rather talk with other men than with me? Dost thou no longer love me, then?"

"*Ai*, master, I love thee. I wish to see no other man than thee."

"Ah, my star, I know!" He drew her close and covered her face with his kisses.

And in her ear he whispered: "And when I come for thee in the night, thou wilt go with me? Say!"

"I will go, *sidi*. *In-cha-'llah!* If God will!"

At that he shook her again, even more roughly than before.

"Don't say that! Not, 'If God will!' Say to me, 'If thou wilt!'"

"*Ai—Ai——*"

There was a silence.

"But let it be quickly," he heard her whispering, after a while. Under his hand he felt a slow shiver moving over her arms. "*Nekaf!*" she breathed, so low that he could hardly hear. "I am afraid."

It was another night when the air was electric and men stirred in their sleep. Lieutenant Genet turned over in bed and stared at the moonlight streaming in through the window from the court of the *caserne*. In the moonlight stood Habib.

"What do you want?" Genet demanded, gruff with sleep.

"I came to you because you are my friend."

The other rubbed his eyes and peered through the window to mark the Sudanese sentry standing awake beside his box at the gate.

"How did you get in?"

"I got in as I shall get out, not only from here, but from Kairwan, from Africa—because I am a man of decision."

"You are also, Habib, a skeleton. The moon shows through you. What have you been doing these weeks, these months, that you should be so shivery and so thin? Is it Old Africa gnawing at your bones? Or are you, perhaps, in love?"

"I am in love. Yes. . . . *Ai, ai, Raoul habiby*, if but thou couldst see her—the lotus bloom opening at dawn—the palm tree in a land of streams——"

"Talk French!" Genet got his legs over the side of the bed and sat up. He passed a hand through his hair. "You are in love, then . . . and again I tell you, for perhaps the twentieth time, Habib, that between a man and a woman in Islam there is no such thing as love."

"But I am not in Islam. I am not in anything! And if you could but see her——"

"Lust!"

"What do you mean by 'lust'?"

"Lust is the thing you find where you don't find trust. Lust is a priceless perfume that a man has in a crystal vial, and he is the miser of its fragrance. He closes the windows when he takes the stopper out of that bottle to drink its breath, and he puts the stopper back quickly again, so that it will not evaporate—not too soon."

"But that, Raoul, is love! All men know that for love. The priceless perfume in a crystal beyond price."

"Yes, love, too, is the perfume in the vial. But the man who has that vial opens the windows and throws the stopper away, and all the air is sweet forever. The perfume evaporates, forever. And this, Habib, is the miracle. The vial is never any emptier than when it began."

"Yes, yes—I know—perhaps—but to-night I have no time——"

The moon *did* shine through him. He was but a rag blown in the dark wind. He had been torn to pieces too long.

"I have no time!" he repeated, with a feverish force. "Listen, Raoul, my dear friend. To-day the price was paid in the presence of the *cadi*, Ben Iskhari. Three days from now they lead me to marriage with the daughter of the notary.

What, to me, is the daughter of the notary? They lead me like a sheep to kill at a tomb. . . . Raoul, for the sake of our friendship, give me hold of your hand. To-morrow night—the car! Or, if you say you haven't the disposal of the car, bring me horses.” And again the shaking of his nerves got the better of him; again he tumbled back into the country tongue. “For the sake of God, bring me two horses! By Sidna Aissa! by the Three Hairs from the Head of the Prophet I swear it! My first-born shall be named for thee, Raoul. Only bring thou horses! Raoul! Raoul!”

It was the whine of the beggar of Barbary. Genet lay back, his hands behind his head, staring into shadows under the ceiling.

“Better the car. I'll manage it with some lies. To-morrow night at moonset I'll have the car outside the gate Djedid.” After a moment he added, under his breath, “But I know your kind too well, Habib ben Habib, and I know that you will not be there.”

Habib was not there. From moonset till half-past three, well over two hours, Genet waited, sitting on the stone in the shadow of the gate, prowling the little square inside. He smoked twenty cigarettes. He yawned three times twenty times. At last he went out got into the car and drove away.

As the throb of the engine grew faint a figure in European clothes and a long-tasselled *chechia* crept out from the dark of a door arch along the street. It advanced toward the gate. It started back at a sound. It rallied again, a figure bedeviled by vacillation. It came as far as the well in the centre of the little square.

On the horizon toward the coast of Sousse rested a low black wall of cloud. Lightning came out of it from time to time and ran up the sky, soundless, glimmering. . . . The cry of the morning muezzin rolled down over the town. The lightning showed the figure sprawled face down on the cool stone of the coping of the well. . . .

The court of the house of bel-Kalfate swam in the glow of candles. A striped awning shut out the night sky, heavy with clouds, and the women, crowding for stolen peeps on

the flat roof. A confusion of voices, raillery, laughter, eddied around the arcaded walls, and thin music bound it together with a monotonous count of notes.

Through the doorway from the marble *entresol* where he stood Habib could see his father, cross-legged on a dais, with the notary. They sat hand in hand like big children, conversing gravely. With them was the *caid* of Kairwan, the *cadi*, ben Iskhar, and a dark-skinned cousin from the oases of the Djerid in the south. Their garments shone; there was perfume in their beards. On a rostrum beyond and above the crowded heads the musicians swayed at their work—*tabouka* players with strong, nervous thumbs; an oily, gross lutist; an organist, watching everything with the lizard eyes of the hashish taker. Among them, behind a taborette piled with bait of food and drink, the Jewish dancing woman from Algiers lolled in her cushions, a drift of white disdain.

He saw it all through a kind of mist. It was as if time had halted, and he was still at the steaming *hammam* of the afternoon, his spirit and his flesh undone, and all about him in the perfumed vapour of the bath the white bodies of his boyhood comrades glimmering luminous and opalescent.

His flesh was still asleep, and so was his soul. The hand of his father city had come closer about him, and for a moment it seemed that he was too weary, or too lazy, to push it away. For a little while he drifted with the warm and perfumed cloud of the hours.

Hands turned him around. It was Houseen Abdelkader, the *caid's* son, the comrade of long ago—Houseen in silk of wine and silver, hyacinths pendent on his cheeks, a light of festival in his eyes.

"*Es-selam alekoum, ya Habib habiby!*" It was the salutation in the plural—to Habib, and to the angels that walk, one at either shoulder of every son of God. And as he spoke he threw a new white burnoose over Habib's head, so that it hung down straight and covered him like a bridal veil.

"*Alekoum selam, ya Seenou!*" It was the name of boyhood, Seenou, the diminutive, that fell from Habib's lips. And he could not call it back.

"Come thou now." He felt the gentle push of Houseen's hands. He found himself moving toward the door that stood

open into the street. The light of an outer conflagration was in his eyes. The thin music of lute and tabouka in the court behind him grew thinner; the boom of drums and voices in the street grew big. He had crossed the threshold. A hundred candles, carried in horizontal banks on laths by little boys, came around him on three sides, like footlights. And beyond the glare, in the flaming mist, he saw the street Dar-el-Bey massed with men. All their faces were toward him, hot yellow spots in which the black spots of their mouths gaped and vanished.

"That the marriage of Habib be blessed! Blessed be the marriage of Habib!"

The riot of sound began to take form. It began to emerge in a measure, a *boom-boom-boom* of tambours and big goatskin drums. A bamboo fife struck into a high, quavering note. The singing club of Sidibou-Saïd joined voice.

The footlights were moving forward toward the street of the market. Habib moved with them a few slow paces without effort or will. Again they had all stopped. It could not be more than two hundred yards to the house of the notary and his waiting bride, but by the ancient tradition of Kairwan an hour must be consumed on the way.

An hour! An eternity! Panic came over Habib. He turned his hooded eyes for some path of escape. To the right, Houseen! To the left, close at his shoulder, Mohammed Sherif—Mohammed the laughing and the well-beloved—Mohammed, with whom in the long, white days he used to chase lizards by the pool of the Aglabides . . . in the long, white, happy days, while beyond the veil of palms the swaying camel palanquins of women, like huge bright blooms, went northward up the Tunis road. . . .

What made him think of that?

"*Boom-boom-boom-boom!*" And around the drums beyond the candles he heard them singing:

*On the day of the going away of my Love,
When the litters, carrying the women of the tribe,
Traversed the valley of Dad, like a sea, mirage,
They were like ships, great ships, the work of the children of
Adoul,
Or like the boats of Yamen's sons. . . .*

"*Boom-boom!*" The monotonous pulse, the slow minor slide of sixteenth tones, the stark rests—he felt the hypnotic pulse of the old music tampering with the pulse of his blood. It gave him a queer creeping fright. He shut his eyes, as if that would keep it out. And in the glow of his lids he saw the tents on the naked desert; he saw the forms of veiled women; he saw the horses of warriors coming like a breaker over the sand—the horses of the warriors of God!

He pulled the burnoose over his lids to make them dark. And even in the dark he could see. He saw two eyes gazing at his, untroubled, untroubling, out of the desert night. And they were the eyes of any woman—the eyes of his bride, of his sister, his mother, the eyes of his mothers a thousand years dead.

"Master!" they said.

They were pushing him forward by the elbows, Mohammed and Houseen. He opened his eyes. The crowd swam before him through the yellow glow. Something had made an odd breach in his soul, and through the breach came memories.

Memories! There at his left was the smoky shelf of blind Moulay's café—black-faced, white-eyed old Moulay. Moulay was dead now many years, but the men still sat in the same attitudes, holding the same cups, smoking the same *chibouk* with the same gulping of bubbles as in the happy days. And there between the café and the *souk* gate was the same whitewashed niche where three lads used to sit with their feet tucked under their little *kashabias*, their *chechias* awry on their shaven polls, and their lips pursed to spit after the leather legs of the infidel conquerors passing by. The *Roumi*, the French blasphemers, the defilers of the mosque! Spit on the dogs! Spit!

Behind his reverie the drums boomed, the voices chanted. The lament of drums and voices beat at the back of his brain—while he remembered the three lads sitting in the niche, waiting from one white day to another for the coming of Moulay Saa, the Messiah; watching for the Holy War to begin.

"And I shall ride in the front rank of the horsemen, please God!"

"And I, I shall ride at Moulay Saa's right hand, please

God, and I shall cut the necks of *Roumi* with my sword, like barley straw!"

Habib advanced in the spotlight of the candles. Under the burnoose his face, half shadowed, looked green and white, as if he were sick to his death. Or, perhaps, as if he were being born again.

The minutes passed, and they were hours. The music went on, interminable.

"*Boom-boom-boom-boom*——" But now Habib himself was the instrument, and now the old song of his race played its will on him.

Pinkness began to creep over the green-white cheeks. The cadence of the chanting had changed. It grew ardent, melting, voluptuous.

. . . *And conquests I have made among the fair ones, perfume inundated,
Beauties ravishing; that sway in an air of musk and saffron,
Bearing still on their white necks the traces of kisses. . . .*

It hung under the pepper trees, drunk with the beauty of flesh, fainting with passion. Above the trees mute lightning played in the cloud. Habib ben Habib was born again. Again, after exile, he came back into the heritage. He saw the heaven of the men of his race. He saw Paradise in a walking dream. He saw women forever young and forever lovely in a land of streams, women forever changing, forever virgin, forever new; strangers intimate and tender. The angels of a creed of love—or of lust!

"Lust is the thing you find where you don't find trust."

A thin echo of the Frenchman's diatribe flickered through his memory, and he smiled. He smiled because his eyes were open now. He seemed to see this Christian fellow sitting on his bed, bare-footed, rumple-haired, talking dogmatically of perfumes and vials and stoppers thrown away, talking of faith in women. And that was the jest. For he seemed to see the women, over there in Paris, that the brothers of that naïve fellow trusted—trusted alone with a handsome young university student from Tunisia. Ha-ha-ha! Now he remembered. He wanted to laugh out loud at a race of men that could be as simple as that. He wanted to

laugh at the bursting of the iridescent bubble of faith in the virtue of beautiful women. The Arab knew!

A colour of health was on his face; his step had grown confident. Of a sudden, and very quietly, all the mixed past was blotted out. He heard only the chanting voices and the beating drums.

*Once I came into the tent of a young beauty on a day of rain. . . .
Beauty blinding. . . . Charms that ravished and made
drunkards of the eyes. . . .*

His blood ran with the song, pulse and pulse. The mute lightning came down through the trees and bathed his soul. And, shivering a little, he let his thoughts go for the first time to the strange and virgin creature that awaited his coming there, somewhere, behind some blind house wall, so near.

"Thou hast suffered exile. Now is thy reward prepared."

What a fool! What a fool he had been!

He wanted to run now. The lassitude of months was gone from his limbs. He wanted to fling aside that clogging crowd, run, leap, arrive. How long was this hour? Where was he? He tried to see the housetops to know, but the glow was in his eyes. He felt the hands of his comrades on his arms.

But now there was another sound in the air. His ears, strained to the alert, caught it above the drums and voices—a thin, high ululation. It came from behind high walls and hung among the leaves of the trees, a phantom yodeling, the welcoming "you-you-you-you" of the women of Islam.

Before him he saw that the crowd had vanished. Even the candles went away. There was a door, and the door was open.

He entered, and no one followed. He penetrated alone into an empty house of silence, and all around him the emptiness moved and the silence rustled.

He traversed a court and came into a chamber where there was a light. He saw a negress, a Sudanese duenna, crouching in a corner and staring at him with white eyes. He turned toward the other side of the room.

She sat on a high divan, like a throne, her hands palms together, her legs crossed. In the completeness of her immobility she might have been a doll or a corpse. After the

strict fashion of brides, her eyebrows were painted in thick black arches, her lips drawn in scarlet, her cheeks splashed with rose. Her face was a mask, and jewels in a crust hid the flame of her hair. Under the stiff kohl of their lids her eyes turned neither to the left nor to the right. She seemed not to breathe. It is a dishonour for a maid to look or to breathe in the moment when her naked face suffers for the first time the gaze of the lord whom she has never seen.

A minute passed away.

"This is the thing that is mine!" A blinding exultation ran through his brain and flesh. "Better this than the 'trust' of fools and infidels! No question here of 'faith.' *Here I know!* I know that this thing that is mine has not been bandied about by the eyes of all the men in the world. I know that this perfume has never been breathed by the passers in the street. I know that it has been treasured from the beginning in a secret place—against this moment—for me. This bud has come to its opening in a hidden garden; no man has ever looked upon it; no man will ever look upon it. None but I."

He roused himself. He moved nearer, consumed with the craving and exquisite curiosity of the new. He stood before the dais and gazed into the unwavering eyes. As he gazed, as his sight forgot the grotesque doll painting of the face around those eyes, something queer began to come over him. A confusion. Something bothering. A kind of fright.

"Thou!" he breathed.

Her icy stillness endured. Not once did her dilated pupils waver from the straight line. Not once did her bosom lift with breath.

"*Thou!* It is *thou*, then, O runner on the housetops by night!"

The fright of his soul grew deeper, and suddenly it went out. And in its place there came a black calm. The eyes before him remained transfixed in the space beyond his shoulder. But by and by the painted lips stirred once.

"*Nekaf!* I am afraid!"

Habib turned away and went out of the house.

In the house of bel-Kalfate the Jewess danced, still, even in voluptuous motion, a white drift of disdain. The music

eddiéd under the rayed awning. Raillery and laughter were magnified. More than a little *bokha*, the forbidden liquor distilled of figs, had been consumed in secret. Eyes gleamed; lips hung. . . . Alone in the thronged court on the dais, the host and the notary, the *caid*, the *cadî*, and the cousin from the south continued to converse in measured tones, holding their coffee cups in their palms.

"It comes to me, on thought," pronounced bel-Kalfate, inclining his head toward the notary with an air of courtly deprecation—"it comes to me that thou hast been defrauded. For what is a trifle of ten thousand *douros* of silver as against the rarest jewel (I am certain, *sidi*) that has ever crowned the sex which thou mayest perhaps forgive me for mentioning?"

And in the same tone, with the same gesture, Hadji Daoud replied: "Nay, master and friend, by the Beard of the Prophet, but I should repay thee the half. For that is a treasure for a sultan's daughter, and this *fillette* of mine (forgive me) is of no great beauty or worth——"

"In saying that, Sidi Hadji, thou sayest a thing which is at odds with half the truth."

They were startled at the voice of Habib coming from behind their backs.

"For thy daughter, Sidi Hadji, thy Zina, is surely as lovely as the full moon sinking in the west in the hour before the dawn."

The words were fair. But bel-Kalfate was looking at his son's face.

"Where are thy comrades?" he asked, in a low voice. "How hast thou come?" Then, with a hint of haste: "The dance is admirable. It would be well that we should remain quiet, Habib, my son."

But the notary continued to face the young man. He set his cup down and clasped his hands about his knee. The knuckles were a little white.

"May I beg thee, Habib ben Habib, that thou shouldst speak the thing which is in thy mind?"

"There is only this, *sidi*, a little thing: When thou hast another bird to vend in the market of hearts, it would perhaps be well to examine with care the cage in which thou hast kept that bird.

"Thy daughter," he added, after a moment of silence—"thy daughter, Sidi Hadji, is with child."

That was all that was said. Hadji Daoud lifted his cup and drained it, sucking politely at the dregs. The *cadi* coughed. The *cadi* raised his eyes to the awning and appeared to listen. Then he observed, "To-night, *in-cha-'llah*, it will rain." The notary pulled his burnoose over his shoulders, groped down with his toes for his slippers, and got to his feet.

"Rest in well-being!" he said. Then, without haste, he went out.

Habib followed him tardily as far as the outer door. In the darkness of the empty street he saw the loom of the man's figure moving off toward his own house, still without any haste.

"And in the night of thy marriage thy husband, or thy father, if thou hast a father——"

Habib did not finish with the memory. He turned and walked a few steps along the street. He could still hear the music and the clank of the Jewess's silver in his father's court. . . .

"*In-cha-'llah!*" she had said, that night.

And after all, it *had* been the will of God. . . .

A miracle had happened. All the dry pain had gone out of the air. Just now the months of waiting for the winter rains were done. All about him the big, cool drops were spattering on the invisible stones. The rain bathed his face. His soul was washed with the waters of the merciful God of Arab men.

For, after all, from the beginning, it had been written. All written!

"*Mektoub!*"

GRIT

By TRISTRAM TUPPER

From Metropolitan Magazine

GRIT was dead. There was no mistake about that. And on the very day of his burial temptation came to his widow.

Grit's widow was "Great" Taylor, whose inadequate first name was Nell—a young, immaculate creature whose body was splendid even if her vision and spirit were small. She never had understood Grit.

Returning from the long, wearisome ride, she climbed the circular iron staircase—up through parallels of garlic-scented tenement gloom—to her three-room flat, neat as a pin; but not even then did she give way to tears. Tears! No man could make Great Taylor weep!

However, drawing the pins from her straw hat, dyed black for the occasion, she admitted, "It ain't right." Grit had left her nothing, absolutely nothing, but an unpleasant memory of himself—his grimy face and hands, his crooked nose and baggy breeches. . . . And Great Taylor was willing that every thought of him should leave her forever. "Grit's gone," she told herself. "I ain't going to think of him any more."

Determinedly Great Taylor put some things to soak and, closing down the top of the stationary washtubs, went to the window. The view was not intriguing, and yet she hung there: roofs and more roofs, a countless number reached out toward infinity, with pebbles and pieces of broken glass glittering in the sunlight; chimneys sharply outlined by shadow; and on every roof, except one, clothes-lines, from which white cotton and linen flapped in the wind at the side of faded overalls and red woollen shirts. They formed a kind of flag—these red, white, and blue garments flying in

the breeze high above a nation of toilers. But Great Taylor's only thought was, "It's Monday."

One roof, unlike the rest, displayed no such flag—a somewhat notorious "garden" and dance hall just around the corner.

And adjacent to this house was a vacant lot on which Great Taylor could see a junk-cart waiting, and perhaps wondering what had become of its master.

She turned her eyes away. "I ain't going to think of him." Steadying her chin in the palms of her hands, elbows on the window-sill, Nell peered down upon a triangular segment of chaotic street. Massed humanity overflowed the sidewalks and seemed to bend beneath the weight of sunlight upon their heads and shoulders. A truck ploughed a furrow through push-carts that rolled back to the curb like a wave crested with crude yellow, red, green, and orange merchandise. She caught the hum of voices, many tongues mingling, while the odours of vegetables and fruit and human beings came faintly to her nostrils. She was looking down upon one of the busiest streets of the city that people sometimes call the Devil's Own.

Grit had wrested an existence from the débris of this city. Others have waded ankle-deep in the crowd; but he, a grimy, infinitesimal molecule, had been at the bottom wholly submerged, where the light of idealism is not supposed to penetrate. Grit had been a junkman; his business address—a vacant lot; his only asset—a junk-cart across the top of which he had strung a belt of jingling, jangling bells that had called through the cavernous streets more plainly than Grit himself: "Rags, old iron, bottles, and ra-ags."

This had been Grit's song; perhaps the only one he had known, for he had shoved that blest cart of his since a boy of thirteen; he had worn himself as threadbare as the clothes on his back, and at last the threads had snapped. He had died of old age—in his thirties. And his junk-cart, with its bells, stood, silent and unmanned, upon the vacant lot just around the corner.

Great Taylor had seen Grit pass along this narrow segment of street, visible from her window; but his flight had always been swift—pushing steadily with head bent, never looking

up. And so it was not during his hours of toil that she had known him. . . .

Nell closed the window. She was not going to think of him any more. "Ain't worth a thought." But everything in the room reminded her of the man. He had furnished it from his junk-pile. The drawer was missing from the centre table, the door of the kitchen stove was wired at the hinges; even the black marble clock, with its headless gilt figure, and the brown tin boxes marked "Coffee," "Bread," and "Sugar"—all were junk. And these were the things that Grit, not without a show of pride, had brought home to her!

Nell sank into a large armchair (with one rung gone) and glowered at an earthen jug on the shelf. Grit had loved molasses. Every night he had spilt amber drops of it on the table, and his plate had always been hard to wash. "Won't have that to do any more," sighed Nell. Back of the molasses jug, just visible, were the tattered pages of a coverless book. This had come to Grit together with fifty pounds of waste paper in gunny-sacks; and though Nell had never undergone the mental torture of informing herself as to its contents, she had dubbed the book "Grit's Bible," for he had pawed over it, spelling out the words, every night for years. It was one thing from which she could not wash Grit's grimy fingermarks, and so she disliked it even more than the sticky molasses jug. "Him and his book and his brown molasses jug!" One was gone forever, and soon she would get rid of the other two.

And yet, even as she thought this, her eyes moved slowly to the door, and she could not help visualizing Grit as he had appeared every evening at dusk. His baggy breeches had seemed always to precede him into the room. The rest of him would follow—his thin shoulders, from which there hung a greenish coat, frayed at the sleeves; above this, his long, collarless neck, his pointed chin and broken nose, that leaned toward the hollow and smudges of his cheek.

He would lock the door quickly and stand there, looking at Nell.

"Why did he always lock the door?" mused Great Taylor. "Nothing here to steal! Why'd he stand there like that?" Every night she had expected him to say something, but he never did. Instead, he would take a long breath, almost

like a sigh, and, after closing his eyes for a moment, he would move into the room and light the screeching gas-jet. "Never thought of turning down the gas." This, particularly, was a sore point with Great Taylor. "Never thought of anything. Just dropped into the best chair."

"It's a good chair, Nell," he would say, "only one rung missing." And he would remain silent, drooping there, wrists crossed in his lap, palms turned upward, fingers curled, until supper had been placed before him on the table. "Fingers bent like claws," muttered Great Taylor, "and doing nothing while I set the table."

Sometimes he would eat enormously, which irritated Nell; sometimes he would eat nothing except bread and molasses, which irritated Nell even more. "A good molasses jug," he would say; "got it for a dime. Once I set a price I'm a stone wall; never give in." This was his one boast, his stock phrase. After using it he would look up at his wife for a word of approval; and as the word of approval was never forthcoming, he would repeat: "Nell, I'm a stone wall; never give in."

After supper he would ask what she had been doing all day. A weary, almost voiceless, man, he had told her nothing. But Great Taylor while washing the dishes would rattle off everything that had happened since that morning. She seldom omitted any important detail, for she knew by experience that Grit would sit there, silent, wrists crossed and palms turned up, waiting. He had always seemed to know when she had left anything out, and she always ended by telling him. Then he would take a long breath, eyes closed, and, after fumbling back of the molasses jug, would soon be seated again beneath the streaming gas-jet spelling to himself the words of his coverless book.

So vivid was the picture, the personality and routine of Grit, that Great Taylor felt the awe with which he, at times, had inspired her. She had been afraid of Grit—afraid to do anything she could not tell him about; afraid not to tell him about everything she had done. But now she determined: "I'll do what I please." And the first thing it pleased Great Taylor to do was to get rid of the odious molasses jug.

She plucked it from the shelf, holding the sticky handle between two fingers, and dropped it into the peach crate that

served as a waste-basket. The noise when the jug struck the bottom of the crate startled her. Great Taylor stood there—listening. Someone was slowly ascending the circular staircase. The woman could hear a footfall on the iron steps.

"Grit's gone," she reassured herself. "I'll do what I please."

She reached for the grimy book, "Grit's Bible," the most offensive article in the room, and with sudden determination tore the book in two, and was about to throw the defaced volume into the basket along with the earthen jug when fear arrested the motion of her hands. Her lips parted. She was afraid to turn her head. The door back of her had opened.

Great Taylor was only ordinarily superstitious. She had buried Grit that morning. It was still broad daylight—early afternoon. And yet when she turned, clutching the torn book, she fully expected to see a pair of baggy breeches preceding a collarless, long-necked man with a broken nose, and smudges in the hollows of his cheeks.

Instead, she wheeled to see a pair of fastidiously pressed blue serge trousers, an immaculate white collar, a straight nose and ruddy complexion. In fact, the man seemed the exact opposite of Grit. Nell glanced at the open door, back at the man, exhaled tremulously with relief, and breathed: "Why didn't you knock?"

"Sorry if I startled you," puffed the man, entirely winded by the six flights. "Must have pushed the wrong button in the vestibule. No great harm done."

"Who are you? What you want?"

"Junk. That's one of the things I came to see' about—the junk in back of my place. I suppose it's for sale." He thrust his white hands into the side pockets of his coat, pulling the coat snugly around his waist and hips, and smiled amiably at Great Taylor's patent surprise.

"You! . . . Buy Grit's junk business!" What did *he* want with junk? He was clean! From head to foot he was clean! His hair was parted. It was not only parted, it was brushed into a wave, with ends pointing stiffly up over his temples (a coiffure affected by bartenders of that day); and Nell even detected the pleasant fragrance of pomade. "You ain't a junkman."

The man laughed. "I don't know about that."

He studied her a moment in silence. Nell was leaning back against the washtubs, her sleeves rolled up, her head tilted quizzically, lips parted, while tints of colour ebbed and flowed in her throat and cheeks. She had attained the ripeness of womanhood and very nearly animal perfection. The man's attitude might have told her this. One of his eyes, beneath a permanently cocked eyebrow, blinked like the shutter of a camera and seemed to take intimate photographs of all parts of her person. The other eye looked at her steadily from under a drooping lid. "No," he said, after the pause of a moment, "I'm not going into the junk business." But he wanted to get the rubbish away from the back of his place. "I'll buy it and have it carted away. It's too near the 'Garden.'" He rocked up on his toes and clicked his heels gently. "I own the house just around the corner."

"I knew it," Nell murmured fatuously. The man was vaguely familiar, even though she could not remember having seen him before.

"Set your price." He turned away, and Nell imagined that his camera-like eye was taking instantaneous photographs of all the broken and mended things in the immaculate room. A wave of hot blood made her back prickle and dyed her throat crimson.

"I don't like rubbish," said the man. "I don't like junk."

"Who does?" stammered Great Taylor.

"You dislike junk, and yet there was your husband, a junkman." He watched her narrowly from beneath his drooping eyelid.

Great Taylor was not of the noblesse, nor did she know the meaning of noblesse oblige; and had she been a man, perhaps she would have denied her former lord and master—once, twice, or even thrice—it has been done; but being a woman, she said: "Leave Grit out of it."

This seemed to please the man from around the corner. "I think we are going to get on," he said significantly. "But you must remember that Grit can't take care of you any longer."

"Grit's gone," assented Nell; "gone for good."

"Uhm." The man allowed his singular eyes to move over

her. "I think we can arrange something. I've seen you pass my place, looking in; and I had something in mind when I started up here—something aside from junk. I could make a place over there—matron or cashier. How would you like that—cashier at the Garden?" He rocked up on his toes and clicked his heels quite audibly.

"I don't know anything about it."

"You'll soon learn," he was confident. He mentioned the salary, and that a former cashier was now half owner of an uptown place. And for half an hour Great Taylor's saturnine mind followed in the wake of his smoothly flowing words.

Why couldn't Grit have talked like that? she kept asking herself. Grit never said anything. Why couldn't he been clean like that, with hair brushed into a curl that sat up like that? . . . The man's words gradually slipped far beyond her, and only his pleasant voice accompanied her own thoughts. No reason why she shouldn't be casheir at the Garden. Only one reason, anyway, and that wasn't any reason at all. . . .

On an afternoon more than a year ago she had gone to the place around the corner. She had told Grit all about it, and Grit had said in his weary voice, "Don't never go again, Nell." She had argued with Grit. The Garden wasn't wicked; nothing the matter with it; other people went there of an afternoon; she liked the music. . . . And Grit had listened, drooping in his chair, wrists crossed and palms turned upward. Finally, when Nell had finished, he had repeated, "Don't go again." He had not argued, for Grit never argued; he was always too weary. But this had been one of his longest speeches. He had ended: "The Devil himself owns that place. I ought to know, my junkyard's right back of it." And he had closed his eyes and taken a long, deep breath. "When I say a thing, Nell, I'm a stone wall. You can't go there again—now or never." And that had settled it, for Great Taylor had been afraid of Grit. But now Grit was dead; gone for good. She would do as she pleased. . . .

When she looked up the man had stopped talking. He glanced at the clock.

"What time?" murmured Great Taylor—

"Five," said the man from just around the corner.

Nell nodded her head and watched as the man's fastidiously pressed trousers and polished shoes cleared the closing door.

Nell immediately went to the looking-glass—a cracked little mirror that hung by the mantelpiece—and studied the reflection of herself with newly awakened interest. She had never seemed so radiant—her smooth hair, her lineless face, her large gray eyes and perfect throat. "I ain't so bad looking," she admitted. Grit had never made her feel this way. And again she asked herself why he could not have been clean like the man from around the corner. She rehearsed all that had been said. She thought of the salary the man had mentioned, and made calculations. It was more than Grit had averaged for the two of them to live on. With prodigal fancy she spent the money and with new-born thrift she placed it in bank. Limited only by her small knowledge of such things, she revelled in a dream of affluence and luxury which was only dissipated when gradually she became conscious that throughout the past hour she had been clinging to a grimy, coverless book.

Damp finger-prints were upon the outer leaves, and the pages adhered to her moistened hand. She loosened her grip, and the book opened to a particularly soiled page on which a line had been underscored with a thick red mark. Dully, Great Taylor read the line, spelling out the words; but it conveyed nothing to her intellect. It was the fighting phrase of a famous soldier: "*I have drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard.*"

"What does that mean?" she mumbled. Her eyes wandered to the top of the page, where in larger type was the title: "Life of 'STONEWALL' JACKSON." "Stonewall," repeated Nell. "Stone wall!" The word had the potency to bring vividly before her Grit's drooping, grimy form. Her ears rang with his ridiculous boast. His voice seemed no longer low and weary. "When I say a thing . . . stone wall. Can't go there again—now or never." Great Taylor mumbled disparagingly, "He got it from a book!" And again she read the fighting phrase of Grit's hero: "*I have drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard.*" "Can't mean Grit," she mused. "He never threw away anything. . . ." And she tossed his desecrated Bible toward the

peach crate; but missing its aim, the book slid along the floor with a slight rustle, almost like a sigh, and struck the chair-board behind the washtubs, where it lay limp and forgotten.

Back of Nell the clock struck the half hour, and she turned quickly, her heart thumping with the fear of being late. But the hour was only three thirty. "Plenty time." She gazed at the broken clock. "A good clock," Grit used to say; "keeps time and only cost a quarter." "Stone wall! . . . Humph! . . ."

Nell transformed the washtubs into a bath by the removal of the centre partition, and within an hour was bathed and dressed. Sticking the pins through her straw hat, dyed black, she took from the bottom drawer of the cupboard a patent-leather hand-bag with colourful worsted fruit embroidered upon its shining sides. She thought of the night Grit had brought it home to her, his pride—he had bought it at a store. But a glance around the room obliterated this memory, and she mumbled, "Wish I warn't never, *never* going to see this place again! Wait till I get money. . . ." She glared at the broken furniture, each piece of which brought back some memory of the man. She could see him drooping in the armchair, with his wrists crossed, fingers curled. She glared at the shelf and imagined him fumbling for something that was not there. She started for the door, then, turning back, reached into the peach crate. "There! Keep your old molasses jug!" she said, in a dry voice, and, replacing the jug on the shelf, she went out into the hall.

Winding down through the tenement-house gloom, Great Taylor was not without fear. Her footfall on the uncarpeted landings and iron treads sounded hollow and strangely loud. The odours that in the past had greeted her familiarly, making known absorbing domestic details of her neighbours, caused her neither to pause nor to sniff. She reached the narrow entrance hall, dark and deserted, and, hurrying down its length, fumbled with the knob and pulled open the street door. Dazzling sunlight, a blast of warm air and the confused clatter of the sidewalk engulfed her. She stood vacillating in the doorway, thinly panoplied for the struggle of existence. Her body was splendid, it is true, but her spirit was small. Despite the sunlight and warmth she

was trembling. And yet, for years she had gone down into this street confident of herself, mingling on equal terms with its wayfarers, her ear catching and translating the sounds that, converging, caused this babel. Now, suddenly, all of it was meaningless, the peddlers with whom she had bickered and bargained in a loud voice with gestures, breast to breast, were strangers and the street an alien land. Many things seemed to have passed backward out of her life. She was no longer Grit's wife, no longer the Great Taylor of yesterday. She was something new-born, free of will; all the old ties had been clipped. She could do as she pleased. No one could stop her. And she pleased to become a denizen of a world which, though just around the corner, was unrelated to the sphere in which she had moved.

"What's the matter with me?" she asked herself. "Nothing to be afraid of. He's gone. I'll do as I please." With such assertions she bolstered her courage, but nevertheless she was trembling. . . .

Glossy-haired women jostled her with their baskets. Taller by a head, Nell pushed her way oblivious of the crowd. At the corner she paused. "I ain't going to be early." A clock across the avenue, visible beneath the reverberating ironwork of the elevated, seemed to have stopped at the half hour. It was four thirty. She watched the long hand until it moved jerkily. A policeman, half dragging a shrieking woman and followed by a jostling, silent crowd, swept Great Taylor aside and put in a call for the wagon.

She hurriedly rounded the corner and passed a window that displayed a pyramid of varnished kegs backed by a mirror with a ram's head painted on it in colours. Beyond was the side entrance. Over the door hung a glass sign, one word in large red letters: "DANCING." She caught the odour of cheap wine and stale beer. Again she said, "I ain't going to be early," and moved away aimlessly.

Beyond the end of this building was a vacant lot and Great Taylor moved more swiftly with head averted. She had passed nearly to the next building before she stopped and wheeled around defiantly. "I ain't afraid to look," she said to herself and gazed across at Grit's junk-cart, with its string of bells, partly concealed back against the fence. It was standing in the shadow, silent, unmanned. She walked

on for a few steps and turned again. The cart was standing as before, silent, unmanned. She stood there, hands on her hips, trying to visualize Grit drooping over the handle—his collarless neck, his grimy face and baggy breeches; but her imagination would not paint the picture. "Grit's gone for good," she said. "Why couldn't he been clean like other people, like the man that owns the Garden? No excuse for being dirty and always tired like that. Anybody could push it and keep clean, too—half clean, anyway." She slipped a glance at the clock. It stood at twenty minutes before the hour of her appointment. "A baby could push it. . . ."

She picked her way across the vacant lot to the junk-cart and laid her hand upon the grimy handle. The thing moved. The strings of bells set up a familiar jingle. "Easy as a baby carriage!" And Great Taylor laughed. The cart reached the sidewalk, bumped down over the curb and pulling Great Taylor with it went beyond the centre of the street. She tried to turn back but a clanging trolley car cut in between her and the curb, a wheel of the junk-cart caught in the smooth steel track and skidded as if it were alive with a stupid will of its own. "It ain't so easy," she admitted. With a wrench she extracted the wheel, narrowly avoided an elevated post and crashed head on into a push-cart, laden with green bananas resting on straw. An Italian swore in two languages and separated the locked wheels.

Hurriedly Great Taylor shoved away from the fruit man and became pocketed in the traffic. Two heavy-hoofed horses straining against wet leather collars crowded her toward the curb and shortly the traffic became blocked. She looked for a means of escape and had succeeded in getting one wheel over the curb when a man touched her on the arm. "Someone is calling from the window up there," he said in a low weary voice like Grit's. Nell swung around, gasping, but the man had moved away down the sidewalk and a woman was calling to her from a second-story window.

"How much?" called the woman, waving a tin object that glinted in the sunlight. Great Taylor stared stupidly. "Clothes boiler," yelled the woman. "Fifty cents. . . . Just needs soldering." "What?" stammered Nell. "Fifty cents," shouted the woman in the window. And something prompted Great Taylor to reply, "Give you a dime."

"Quarter," insisted the woman. "Dime . . . Ten cents," repeated Great Taylor, somewhat red in the face. "Once I set a price I'm a . . ." But the woman's head had disappeared and her whole angular person soon slid out through the doorway. Entirely befogged, Great Taylor fumbled in her patent-leather bag with its worsted fruit, discovered two nickels, and placed the leaky boiler beside the rusty scales on the junk-cart.

"Ain't I got enough junk without that?" she grumbled. But the traffic of the Devil's Own city was moving again and Great Taylor was moving with it. She passed a corner where a clock in a drug store told her the time—ten minutes of the hour. "I got to get back," she told herself, and heading her cart determinedly for an opening succeeded in crossing to the opposite side of the congested avenue. There, a child, attracted by the jingling of the bells, ran out of a house with a bundle of rags tied in a torn blue apron. The child placed the bundle on the scales and watched with solemn wide eyes. Great Taylor again fumbled in the bag and extracted a coin which transformed the little girl into an India-rubber thing that bounced up and down on one foot at the side of the junk-cart. "Grit never gave me only a penny a pound," she cried.

"Grit is dead," said Great Taylor.

"Dead!" echoed the child, clinging motionless to the wheel. "*Grit* is dead?" She turned suddenly and ran toward the house, calling: "Mamma, poor old Grit is dead."

Great Taylor put her weight against the handle of the cart. She pushed on desperately. Something had taken hold of her throat. "What's the matter with me?" she choked. "Didn't I know he was dead before this? Didn't I know it all along? I ain't going to cry over no man . . . not in the street, anyway." She hurriedly shoved her cart around a corner into a less-congested thoroughfare and there a mammoth gilded clock at the edge of the sidewalk confronted her. The long hand moved with a sardonic jerk and indicated the hour—the hour of her appointment. But Great Taylor turned her eyes away. "Pushing a junk-cart ain't so easy," she said, and for a moment she stood there huddled over the handle; then, taking a long, deep breath, like Grit used to do, she straight-

ened herself and sang out, clear and loud, above the noises of the cavernous street: "Rags . . . old iron . . . bottles and ra-ags."

The city that people call the Devil's Own lost its sharp outline and melted into neutral tints, gray and blue and lavender, that blended like an old, old tapestry. It was dusk. Great Taylor strode slowly with laborious long strides, her breast rising and falling, her body lengthening against the load, her hands gripping the handle of the cart, freighted with rusty, twisted, and broken things. At crossings she paused until the murmuring river of human beings divided to let her pass. Night settled upon the high roofs and dropped its shadow into the streets and alleys, and the windows began to glow. Light leaped out and streaked the sidewalks while at each corner it ran silently down from high globes like full moons and spattered over the curb into the gutter and out as far as the glistening car tracks. She passed blocks solid with human beings and blocks without a human soul. Cataracts of sound crashed down into the street now and again from passing elevated trains, and the noise, soon dissipated, left trembling silence like pools of sinister black water. She passed through stagnant odours and little eddies of perfume. She lifted her drooping head and saw a door open—the darkness was cut by a rectangle of soft yellow light, two figures were silhouetted, then the door closed. A gasoline torch flared above a fruit stand hard against the towering black windowless wall of a warehouse and a woman squatted in the shadow turning a handle. Nell pushed on past a cross street that glittered and flared from sidewalk to cornice, and at the next corner a single flickering gas-jet revealed a dingy vestibule with rows of tarnished speaking tubes. . . .

The air became thick with noise and odours and the sidewalks swayed with people. Great Taylor slowly rounded a familiar corner, slackened the momentum of the junk-cart, and brought up squarely against the curb. Dragging the wheels, she gained the sidewalk and, beyond, the rims of the cart cut into soft earth. She crossed the vacant lot. A city's supercilious moon alone gave its half-light to the junk-yard of Grit and here the woman unloaded the cart, carrying a heavy unyielding things against her breast. She did not

linger. She was trembling from fatigue and from emotions even more novel to her. She closed the gate without looking back at the weird crêpe-like shadows that draped themselves among the moonlit piles of twisted things. Nearing the corner, she glanced with dull eyes at a glaring red sign: "Dancing." Voices, laughter, and music after a kind came from the doorway. A man was singing. Great Taylor recognized the voice but did not pause. She was not to see the man from just around the corner again for many years.

Hurrying, without knowing why she hurried, Nell climbed the circular iron staircase up through parallels of odorous gloom and, entering her flat, closed the door and quickly locked it against the world outside—the toil, the bickering, the sneers, the insults and curses flung from alley gates and down upon her in the traffic of the Devil's Own city. She closed her eyes and took a long deep breath almost like a sigh. She was home. It was good to be home, but she lacked the words and was far too weary to express her emotions.

Lighting the gas she sank into a chair. What did it matter if the gas was screeching? She drooped there, hands in her lap, wrists crossed, palms turned upward and fingers curled stiffly like claws—from holding to the jarring handle of the junk-cart.

Presently she raised her eyes and glanced across at the shelf with its row of tin boxes marked "Bread," "Coffee," "Sugar." On the next shelf was Grit's molasses jug. She arose and fumbled behind this, but nothing was there—Grit's Bible was gone. Then she remembered, and striking a match placed her cheek to the floor and found the grimy book beneath the stationary washtubs. "Stone wall," she murmured, "Grit was a stone wall." At the mantelpiece she caught a glimpse of herself in the cracked little mirror, but she was too weary to care what she looked like, too weary to notice that her hair was matted, that grime and smudges made hollows in her cheeks, and that even her nose seemed crooked.

She sank again into the chair beneath the screeching gas-jet. "Grit," she repeated dully, "was a stone wall." And between very honest, tired, and lonely tears she began slowly

to spell out the words of the coverless book, having gained within the past few hours some understanding of what it means in the battle of life to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard.

There came another afternoon, another evening, another year, and still another; but this narrative covers merely a part of two days—Great Taylor's first and last as a junk-woman. The latter came nearly ten years after the burial of Grit. For almost a decade Nell followed in his grimy footprints and the polyglot people of the lower East Side, looking down from their windows as she passed through the congested streets pushing steadily with head bent, thought of her either as an infinitesimal molecule at the bottom of the mass where the light of idealism seldom penetrates or else as a female Colossus striding from end to end of the Devil's Own city only ankle-deep in the débris from which she wrested an existence. But to Great Taylor it seemed not to matter what people thought. She sang her song through the cavernous streets, the only song she knew: "Rags, old iron, bottles, and ra-ags." She pounded with a huge, determined fist on alley gates, she learned expertly to thread the traffic and to laugh at the teamsters, their oaths, their curses. "They ain't so bad." And, finally, bickering and bargaining with men of all classes, she came to wonder why people called this the Devil's Own city. In all those years of toil she did not once see him in the eyes of men. But there came the day when she said, "I'm done."

On this day Great Taylor lifted the end of a huge kitchen range against two struggling members of the other sex. A pain shot through her breast, but she carried her part of the dead weight, saying nothing, and, at high noon, pushed her jingling, jangling cart through streets sharply outlined with sunlight and shadow to a dilapidated brick warehouse that, long since, had taken the place of Grit's junk-yard.

There, in the interior gloom of the shabby old building, could be seen piles of broken, twisted, and rusty things—twisted iron rods, broken cam-shafts, cog wheels with missing teeth, springs that had lost their elasticity—a miniature mountain of scrap iron each piece of which at some time had been a part of some smoothly working machine. In another pile were discarded household utensils—old pots and pans

and burnt-out kettles, old stoves through the linings of which the flames had eaten and the rust had gnawed. There were other hillocks and mountains with shadowy valleys between—a mountain of waste paper, partly baled, partly stuffed into bursting bags of burlap, partly loose and scattered over the grimy floor; a hill of rags, all colours fading into sombre shadows. . . . And in the midst of these mountains and valleys of junk sat Great Taylor upon her dilapidated throne.

She drooped there over an old coverless book, spelling out the words and trying to forget the pain that was no longer confined to her breast. From shoulder to hip molten slag pulsed slowly through her veins and great drops of sweat moved from her temples and made white-bottomed rivulets among the smudges of her cheeks. "I'm done," she mumbled, closing Grit's book. "I got a right to quit. I got a right to be idle like other people. . . ."

Raising her head she appraised the piles that surrounded her. "All this stuff!" It had to be disposed of. She lifted herself from the creaking chair and, finding a pot of black paint and a board, laboured over this latter for a time. "I could get rid of it in a week," she mused. But she was done—done for good. "I ain't going to lay a hand on the cart again!" She studied the sign she had painted, and spelled out the crooked letters: "M A n W A n T e D." It would take a man a month, maybe more, she reckoned, adding: "Grit could done it in no time." She moved to the arched door of the warehouse and hung the sign outside in the sunlight against an iron shutter and for a moment stood there blinking. Despite the sunlight and warmth she was trembling, the familiar noises were a babel to her ears; the peddlers with their carts piled high with fruits and vegetables and colourful merchandise seemed like strangers; the glossy-haired women with baskets seemed to be passing backward out of her life, and the street was suddenly an alien land. "What's the matter with me?" she asked herself.

Returning to the interior gloom of the warehouse, she looked down upon the old junk-cart. The string of bells was the only part of it that had not been renewed twice, thrice, a number of times since Grit had left it standing on the vacant lot. "Guess I'll save the bells," she decided.

The rest she would destroy. Nobody else was going to use it—nobody. She cast about for an adequate instrument of destruction, an axe or sledge, and remembering a piece of furnace grate upon the farther pile of junk, made her way slowly into the deepening shadows.

There, at the foot of the rusty mountain of scrap iron, Great Taylor stood irresolute, straining her eyes to pierce the gloom. She had not seen any one enter; and yet, standing beyond the pile with white hands stabbing the bottom of his pockets, was a man. She could not remember having seen him before, and yet he was vaguely familiar. One eye looked at her steadily from beneath a drooping lid, the other blinked like the shutter of a camera and seemed to take intimate photographs of all parts of her grimy person. His sleek hair was curled over his temples with ends pointing up, and she caught, or imagined, the fragrance of pomade.

"What do you want?" she breathed, allowing the heavy piece of iron to sink slowly to her side.

"Sit down," said the man. "Let's talk things over."

Great Taylor sank into a broken armchair, her huge calloused hands rested in her lap, wrists crossed, palms turned upward, fingers stiffly curled. "I know who you are," she mumbled, leaning forward and peering through the half-light. "What do you want?"

"You hung out a sign. . . ."

"You ain't the man I expected."

"No?" He rocked up on his toes and made a gesture that indicated the piles of junk. "You're done."

"I'm done," assented Great Taylor. "I ain't going to lay a hand on the cart again. Ten years. . . ."

"Uhm. You have a right to the things that other women have. But . . ." He glanced around the dingy warehouse. "Is this all you have for your ten years?"

Great Taylor made no reply.

"It isn't much," said the man.

"It's something," said Great Taylor.

"Not enough to live on."

"Not enough to live on," she echoed. "But I can't go on working. I can't go on alone. The cart's too heavy to push alone. I'm done." She drooped there.

"I think we can arrange something." For a moment the

man was silent, his queer eyes moving over her body. "I had something in mind when I entered—something aside from junk. I could make a place for you. I'll do better than that. With this rubbish you buy a half share in one of my places and sit all day with your hands folded. You can make more in a week than you ever made in a year. . . ." His voice flowed smoothly on until Great Taylor raised her head.

"I didn't come ten years ago."

The man laughed. "Who cares how you make your money? Do you know what people say when they hear you calling through the streets? They say, 'It's nothing, it's only Great Taylor.' And do you know what they think when they look down upon you and your junk-cart? They think of you just as you used to think of Grit. . . ."

She staggered to her feet. "You leave Grit out of it!" For ten years a sentence had been pulsing through her mind. "Get out!" she cried, "*Grit warn't dirty underneath!*" The pain in her breast choked her and stopped her short as she moved threateningly toward him. The piece of iron fell heavily to the floor.

"Who sees underneath?" came the voice of the man.

"Grit," she moaned, "Grit sees underneath." And she hurled her tortured body forward, striking at him with her fists. She fell upon the pile of scrap iron. Each heave of her breast was a sob. She struggled to her feet and glared around her. But the man was not there.

Moaning, she sank into the armchair. "What's the matter with me? There warn't nobody here! *He* warn't here. No man could stay the same for ten years." The piles of junk seemed slowly to revolve around her. "What's the matter with me?" she asked again. "Ain't I got a right? . . ."

"Of course you have a right to the things you want." From the top of the hill of rags came his voice. It brought Great Taylor to her feet, sobbing. But the pain in her side, more fearful than ever, held her motionless.

"Wash away the ugly grime of toil," said the voice. "You're less than forty. You're a woman. You can have the things that other women have."

"I got more than some women," she cried. "I'm clean—

I'm clean underneath." She stumbled toward him but again sank to the floor. She tried to spring up. Her will sprang up, for her spirit at last was splendid even if her body was weak. It dragged her up from the floor. And now she could see him all around her—on top the hill of rags, on top the mountain of iron, amid the bursting bags of waste paper—blinking down as he sat enthroned upon the débris—the twisted, broken, discarded things of the city that people call the Devil's Own. "These are mine!" he called. "And you belong to the débris. You are one of the broken, useless things." From all points he moved toward her. She could no longer fight him off. There was no escape. "Grit," she cried, "Grit, you can stop him. You . . . you was a stone wall. . . ."

Stumbling back, her hand struck a familiar object. There was a tinkle of bells. She wheeled around, and there in the shadows of the dilapidated old warehouse someone was drooping over the handle of the junk-cart—a collarless man with baggy breeches and a nose that leaned toward the smudges and hollows of his cheek. He was striving to move the cart. "Not alone," cried Great Taylor. "You can't do it alone! But we can do it together!" She took hold of the handle. The thing moved. "Easy as a baby carriage," she laughed. "We should always done it together. . . ."

Out of the gloom, through the arched doorway into the sunlight moved the cart with its jingling, jangling bells. Glossy-haired women with their baskets made way for it and the cart bumped down over the curb. Teamsters drew aside their heavy-hoofed horses. Peddlers rolled their push-carts back to the curb.

"The street opens when we work together," laughed Great Taylor.

"Who is she talking to?" asked the people.

"Talking to herself," the ignorant replied.

"And why is she looking up like that?"

"Looking for junk."

"And why does she laugh?" they asked.

"Who knows? Who knows? Perhaps she's happy."

A song burst from her throat: "Rags," she sang, "old iron . . . bottles, and ra-ags. . . ."

People inside their houses heard her song and the bells of

her cart. "It's nothing," they laughed, "it's only Great Taylor." A woman came to a window and waved an object that glinted in the sunlight. "How much?" she called down. But Great Taylor seemed not to hear. A child ran out with a bundle in her arms. "Rags," called the child, then stepped back out of the way, wondering. Great Taylor was passing on. An elevated train sent down a cataract of noise, but her song rose above it: "Rags . . . old iron. . . ." And when she reached the avenue a policeman with a yellow emblematic wheel embroidered on his sleeve held up his hand and stopped the traffic of the Devil's Own city to let Great Taylor pass.

And so, like a female Colossus, she strode slowly across the city, her head tilted, her eyes looking up from the cavernous streets—up beyond the lofty roofs of houses, her voice becoming fainter and fainter: "Rags . . . old iron . . . bottles and ra-ags . . ." until the God of those who fall fighting in the battle of life reached down and, drawing the sword, threw away the scabbard.

END OF VOLUME ONE

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